



THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

BY

“SCRUTATOR,”

AUTHOR OF

“RECOLLECTIONS OF A FOX-HUNTER,”

“THE MASTER OF THE HOUNDS,”

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE following morning Edmund drove Edith and his sister over to Woodborough Park, where they were received with heart-felt congratulations by the Earl, who since his daughter's marriage had indulged the hope of seeing Edith, who held the next place in his affections, united to his beloved Edmund.

“ Ah, my dear Edith,” the Earl said, “ I have had a sad lonely time without seeing your sweet, cheering smile for so many weeks, and now that you are restored to health, you really must come here again for change of air. You are always well and

happy at Woodborough. So now, Edmund, you must tell Mrs. Maxwell, with my kind regards, that she must spare Edith to me for a week or two at least ; and your sister will I hope give me the pleasure of her company also, as long as she may find our society agreeable."

"I fear, my dear Uncle," Emmeline said, "you will find two wild girls, like ourselves, rather too much of a good thing ; at least I can answer for myself always getting into mischief of some kind, except at Morton Grange, where the Colonel maintains very strict discipline, and keeps me in great order."

"I am not the least afraid, Emmeline, of your wildness or mischief," the Earl replied ; "you know this is Liberty Hall, where all do as they please."

"Well, dear Uncle, you will I fear wish me at home again before I have been here two days ; but as you are bold enough to invite me after what I have said, I will do myself the honour of waiting on your Lordship as soon my company can be dispensed

with at Morton Grange, which I think will be on Tuesday next."

"Very well, Emmeline, then I shall take you at your word, and send the carriage for you and Edith that same afternoon."

"Which arrangement being most happily acceded to on my part, my dear Lord, you will further oblige me by taking Edmund with you round your home farm, while Edith and myself have a run through the pleasure grounds to warm ourselves after our cold drive."

We will pass over the few intervening days until Edmund and Edith are once more reinstated in their old quarters at Woodborough, which had been to them the scene of their happiest unclouded days of early youth, for it had been ever to them a second home, where without restraint they could enjoy all the amusements and pleasures of country life unfettered and untrammelled in their innocent recreations, and the kind-hearted Earl was in every respect to them like a second and most indulgent father.

"Well, my dear Edith," Emmeline said

the first day of their arrival there, "here we are once more at Liberty Hall, and to confess the truth, my love, although your mamma is one of the dearest, kindest creatures in the world, I always feel, in the presence of the Colonel, as I suppose a raw recruit would before his drill sergeant. Your papa cannot divest himself of the idea that he is still a Colonel on parade. Now, here we don't get a reprimand or austere look for being late at breakfast or late at dinner. And now let us go down to the stables, look over Edmund's stud of hunters and see if the ponies are—as your late admirer the Captain would say—in proper trim and fit to go; for we will give them a breather tomorrow over to Wychwood, to see in what kind of humour the high and mighty Reginald will receive his new sister. By the way, Edith, it is lucky for you that you selected the younger before the elder brother, since Master Reginald, although very handsome and most agreeable when on his good behaviour, is notwithstanding, between ourselves, a quick-tempered, vicious

kicking animal—like his favourite hunter “Fireaway,” and will never go quiet in harness—that is, my dear, he is only fit to be a bachelor.”

“I never believed, dear Emmy, he entertained any serious thoughts about me, although we have always been very good friends.”

“Perhaps not, Edith—yet I would not answer for what his real feelings are, for he declared positively you never should marry Shuttleworth if he turned Benedict himself; and I won’t warrant his receiving you very complacently now as Edmund’s intended; but that is of little consequence: I never humour his pettishness, neither must you.”

“Holloa!” cried Edmund, who was walking with the Earl, “where are you girls going?”

“Only down to the stables, Teddy dear, to see if the ponies are fit to appear at our lawn meet to-morrow morning, as you do not approve of your sister or wife riding hunting.”

“Wait a moment, Emmy, and I will go with you.”

“Oh, no, Edmund, continue your walk with the Earl: we don’t want you tied to our apron strings all the day long.”

“I will punish you for this impertinence, Miss Emmeline,” her brother replied. “She is very well behaved at home, my dear Uncle, but here quite unmanageable, from being spoilt by too great indulgence.”

“Ah, very likely,” she said, “but there is a spoilt boy as well as a spoilt girl at Woodborough. So now, Master Edmund, if you want something to do, take your gun and kill us some wild ducks for dinner to-morrow—there are lots upon the lake—so good-bye until dinner time, for we are going for a long ramble after our inspection of the ponies.”

“Ah, Edmund,” the Earl remarked as they turned away, “you are indeed highly favoured in possessing the affections of two such dear cheerful girls, and notwithstanding our mutual disappointment, the Almighty has of his great goodness pro-



vided a helpmate worthy of you; for I am obliged to confess that Edith is far more amiable than my own child, and I am most thankful that her choice has fallen upon you, my dear boy, when I feared she had given her affections to another."

"I do, indeed, my dear Uncle, feel most grateful for this greatest of all earthly blessings, and it shall be the study of my life to prove myself deserving her deep, devoted love."

"But when do you think of being married, Edmund?"

"Not before the spring of the year. I shall then have possession of St. Austins, and Edith says she is so completely happy now that she would prefer it being deferred until that time."

"Well, I admire her the more, my dear Edmund, for such feelings, but you know this is your home as well as St. Austins. Although confiding in your mutual affection, you will never be happier than at this present time; for marriage brings many cares

and anxieties, from which you are now wholly free."

"Yes, my dear Uncle, I am well aware that such is the case; but with dear Edith, my friend as well as wife, troubles or cares will tend to draw us nearer together. And now, to indulge that spoilt girl, Emmeline, I will take my gun, with old Hero, and try to shoot a couple of ducks before dinner."

The party at Woodborough that evening was a very happy one, and the high spirits of Emmeline had their effect upon the whole household. The old butler's face was lit up with unwonted animation, and Thomas, Edmund's favourite footman, seemed beside himself with joy at his young master's return.

"What are you about, Thomas?" Emmeline said. "I asked you for bread, and you bring me lobster sauce to eat with mutton. 'Gude faith,' as Mrs. Macpherson said, when her lout of a serving-man sent a pair of boiled fowls and white sauce into the lap of her new silk gown, 'but the mon's demented.'"

"I beg your pardon, Miss," Thomas said, "but I was —"

"Just a-thinking," added Emmeline, "as Will Lane says, of something else."

"My dear Emmeline," Edmund said, "you keep running on in such an extraordinary manner this evening, that I believe you are the person demented."

"I am not at Morton Grange, now," she whispered to the Earl, "where every serving-man looks as if he had a poker down his throat, but at dear Woodborough, which would not be Woodborough to me, unless I could do and say what I like. Are you angry with me, dear Uncle?" appealing to the Earl.

"No, no, my child, that you know I never can be; it always gives me the greatest pleasure that you feel so much at home here; and as you are going over to Wychwood to-morrow morning, you must ask Mrs. Knightley, with your father and Reginald, to dine here on this day week."

"I don't know about the latter," she

said, "he is so snappish sometimes, that I am afraid of his biting; but suppose, dear Uncle, we extend the family circle a little, by inviting a few others to make up a quadrille in the evening. We have been all very dull lately, and we ought to have a merry-making now the wanderer is returned home, and I have the happy prospect of such a charming new sister. If you will leave the invitations to me, my dear Lord, I will select those I know you would approve. To begin, I would have Mr. Welford, and old Squire White, as vis-à-vis at the dinner-table—just the antipodes of the old and new school—Major Townshend, to tell long stories of his own manufacturing; our little friend, the Vicar, and a few others, not to exceed, with Colonel and Mrs. Maxwell, twenty around your festive board."

"Well, dear Emmy," the Earl said, in the kindest manner, "you shall have your wish gratified; and, in addition, you may ask a few other ladies and gentlemen in the evening."

“Oh, thank you, my dear kind Uncle. We shall have such a delightful party!”

The felicitations, on Edmund's return home, were poured in upon him from all his fox-hunting friends, high and low, the next morning when he appeared in his new pink at his father's place, where, from the extraordinary event of the last week, many more ladies than usual graced the opening meet. Edith also engaged more than common attention and interest, from having escaped a fate so fearful; and rumours were circulated freely of her long attachment and engagement to the preserver of her life.

“Ah, Knightley!” exclaimed the Major, “so it appears I was a true prophet, notwithstanding your positive denial of the fact that a certain young lady would become your property, or engaged to be so, before this very day came round again.”

“Extraordinary things do occur sometimes, Townshend, and this is one; for when you foretold this event, I saw no probability of its fulfilment, being at that

time entirely ignorant of the young lady's *penchant* for your humble servant."

"But, by Jove! that wild fool, Chetwynd, had nearly stopped your love-making; it was a very near thing, I am told."

"Too near to be agreeable, Townshend, so let us dismiss that subject, and as Mrs. Townshend is not here, I must tell you that my sister is commissioned to invite her and yourself to dine at Woodborough on the 7th."

"We shall come of course, Knightley, for had I a dozen invitations for that day, they should all give way to the Earl's—and, by Jove, my boy, we'll have a glorious evening—a bit of a hop afterwards, perhaps, for the young ladies."

"Just so, Townshend—so put on your dancing pumps—and now good-bye."

Of the day's sport we have nothing particular to relate, save that Will Lane, being now restored to perfect health, concluded this first regular day's fixture for the season, by bringing home the heads of two foxes, which came to hand without much trouble.

## CHAPTER II.

Two days after the Earl received a letter from his daughter to the effect that, her husband having engaged stables at Melton for his stud of twelve hunters, he had offered to leave her at Woodborough for a few days, in their way to that place, if her father would receive her. The proffered visit was of course accepted, and, singular enough, Lady Agnes arrived the very day of the Earl's party — Sir Digby having stopped the previous night at Dunkerton House, where, however, from not being included in his wife's invitation, he remained only two days, and then continued his journey to the emporium of fox-hunters.

The appearance and manner of Lady Agnes had undergone considerable change



since her marriage. She had become very thin and thoughtful, subdued and quiet in her manner; and although trying to appear cheerful and in good spirits, the assumption of gaiety was evident to her old friends—that it was an assumption only of what she did not feel. To Mrs. Errington and Edith she spoke of her great happiness with Sir Digby, his attention and devotion to her. But neither Mrs. Errington nor Edith was deceived by these expressions of tender regard; for to their quick perceptions her restless wandering eye betrayed an uneasy, doubtful state of mind, the very reverse of true confidence and love.

Lady Agnes, although at home once more, felt an alien in her father's house. She had incurred his displeasure by marrying a man she could not now herself esteem, although she loved and feared him—yes, the confession must be made—Sir Digby Colville had brought her once high spirit and imperious temper into subjection to his will. Five months had effected a change



in her which appeared almost incredible to herself. She had realised to its fullest extent the curse pronounced upon Eve: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." She had forsaken literally all to follow a stranger — unknown to her then, save by name — his true character and disposition never revealed to her until after she had sworn to honour and obey him at the altar!

Her father had received her with kindness—like the repentant prodigal—although she had expressed little contrition for her wilful and disobedient conduct; but there was a restraint in his manner towards her which was not visible in his address to Edith, who appeared now to occupy the place she once held in his heart. Edith alone was unchanged—gentle, warm-hearted, and affectionate as ever. Edmund also seemed to have forgotten her unfeeling behaviour to him by a return of his usual friendliness. There was no perturbation, no uneasiness perceptible in his look or manner towards her, even at the first

moment of their meeting; for Edmund now felt fully persuaded that the loss of her love had been unspeakable gain to him; he loved one now who loved him with her whole heart and soul, and when he surveyed Lady Agnes and Edith together, amazement seized him that he ever could have preferred the one to the other. Anxiety and self-reproach had worked a sad change in the beauty of Lady Agnes, whose features had assumed a careworn, peevish expression, so that she looked ten years older than Edith.

Time passed on; there was more than usual gaiety during the winter season. The annual Hunt Ball followed. Lady Agnes was there, being still a visitor at Woodborough. Sir Digby continued at Melton. He and his friend Lord W. had engaged a house between them for the season, the only one to be had; small and comfortable, her liege lord wrote her, but not sufficiently commodious for more than a couple of bachelors. She could, therefore, remain at Woodborough. The Earl must

be so glad to have her with him again! Lady Agnes bit her lip at this cool suggestion of her *devoted* husband; but she knew remonstrance would be useless. Sir Digby had a quiet, cool way of doing things — he was provokingly cool sometimes, — but Lady Agnes knew there was no appeal from his decision, and she felt his sarcasm about remaining at Woodborough, where he had expected to have taken up his winter quarters, instead of being at Melton. He had calculated through her intercession and influence on being reconciled to her father.

Sir Digby was quite a man of the world; he was ever attentive and polite to his wife, but this very politeness annoyed her. He never exhibited want of temper in her presence. When she pouted, fretted, and shed tears because she could not, as formerly, have her own way, Sir Digby would stand before the mirror surveying his handsome person and twisting his whiskers, remarking, in the most *sang-froid* manner, “Really, Lady Agnes, these perpetual outbreaks are very indecorous, and red

eyes excessively unbecoming to young ladies. I have an engagement this afternoon, and hope, when I return to dine, you will have recovered your complacency of temper and good looks."

Lady Agnes had loved, and did still love her husband — what newly married woman does not?—but she dared not show, even when first married, how much she loved him. He had never loved her, there was no warmth of heart or cordiality of manner about him, it was foreign to his nature. He was cold, deferential,—sometimes painfully so — courteous and respectful, in short a fashionable husband. She could not upbraid him with unkindness ; she could not accuse him of speaking or treating her harshly ; he was always the same, polite, apathetic, imperturbable, and she felt powerless as an infant to contend with him, so he always carried his point.

What were her feelings now when again treading those boards ? what her reflections when passing through that room where, twelve months since, she had listened with

rapture to the avowal of his love? She was then in all the pride and power of youthful beauty—admired, courted, and flattered—arrogant and haughty. What was she now? a humbled and neglected wife. The same familiar faces were around her, but not with the same expression as then. They looked coldly upon her now. No soft flattering speeches proceeded from the lips of her former admirers. Not even Captain Duncombe had one little compliment to pay. She seemed isolated; set apart from kith and kindred and friends—as one marked out for pity or compassion only. Remarks reached her ear also, turning her bitterness of spirit into gall. She overheard the eldest Miss Duncombe say, “Poor thing! how miserable she looks; so changed, so thin, so woe-begone, one would take her for a woman of forty!”

No name was mentioned, but Lady Agnes felt the allusion. She wished she had never attended that ball; all appeared happy but herself. Edith looked more lovely than ever; all spoke in raptures of her

beauty, all seemed to bask in the sunshine of her sweet smiles, and although now engaged, she received the same homage as before.

Edmund also looked more handsome and cheerful than she had ever seen him. Would he treat Edith with indifference and neglect when his wife? Ah! no, she knew the heart of Edmund Knightley too well. Vain, worse than vain, were all such reflections now; but she might have been there then, the happy, contented, and beloved wife of him whose love she had treated with scorn! It was a relief to her overburthened mind when the ball was over, and she returned home to mourn and weep alone.

Two more months have passed away. The ides of March have come; but not with them has come Sir Digby Colville. He is finishing the season at Melton; "he will be at Dunkerton House the middle of April on his way to town. Lady Agnes can join him there. He hopes she has been enjoying herself at Woodborough as he has at



Melton—the place had been unusually gay ——.”

The marriage of Edmund and Edith was fixed to take place at the little village church of Morton Grange, on the 15th of April, and Mrs. Duncombe's lease of St. Austin's having expired, preparations were making for the reception of the young couple. The Captain had taken a cottage in the neighbourhood, his mother with her family having gone to the gay town of Waterton, which proved a very agreeable change to the young ladies, from a dull country life.

The 15th of April arrived; it was a bright, cheerful morning — bright and cheerful as the thoughts and feelings of Edmund and Edith, surrounded by the smiling, happy faces of their friends and relations, by whom the church was thronged. The young and happy pair pledged their troth to each other with sincerity and truth. Lady Agnes was present at the ceremony, so different to that in which she had been the principal party, some few months

before. All was joy and animation now. The whole neighbourhood seemed congregated here ; not a pew stood vacant in that old church ; even the gallery creaked under the weight of closely packed spectators, anxious to witness the union of their favourite Edmund, with one who had become no less known for her beauty, than her kind and charitable disposition to the poor, and her affable, unaffected manner to all.

As Edmund and Edith left the church, now man and wife, although wanting not that link to bind them in the closest unity of love, the bells sent forth their merry peal, which was quickly taken up and re-echoed from every church tower for ten miles round. In every parish where the old Squire and his son were known, the farmers had resolved, as Tom Springfield said, " to set the bells a-going, and have a merry making on Master Edmund's wedding day." A grand breakfast had been prepared by the Colonel at Morton Grange, of which a large party of friends, relations and neigh-



bours partook ; but Edith and Edmund had immediately set out on their bridal tour, intending to return home again by the 1st of June.

About a week after this event, Lady Agnes joined her husband at Dunkerton House, whence, after remaining a few days, they proceeded to London for the season, and she became inaugurated into the mysteries of fashionable life, which, when the novelty had passed away, brought little additional happiness to her excited mind. Sir Digby was, as I have before said, a very fashionable husband ; his wife was introduced to his fashionable acquaintances ; she had her carriage and servants at her own disposal ; Sir Digby had his cab and tiger. She had perfect control over the disposition of her time ; she could accept invitations without consulting him ; he of course did the same. Sir Digby seldom dined at home, except when he gave a dinner party, which proved of rare occurrence. He voted *tête-à-têtes* with his wife a bore. They met more frequently in public than in private,

for he was generally out all night somewhere, not returning home till a late hour in the morning, and being most anxious not to disturb Lady Agnes's rest, he had his separate room.

To drown care and thoughts — those bitter, self-accusing thoughts — thoughts of that wilful perverseness of mind, which, despite the warnings and advice of every true friend, she had resolutely maintained — had made her the arbitress of her now wretched fate — Lady Agnes entered into gaiety and dissipation; for to sit alone at home, moping and mourning, became insupportable. And yet many of those invitations were accepted by her, in the hope of meeting her husband there. Her wish was gratified; she had met him several times, at balls and other parties, but she never desired to meet him so again. He was the same polite, agreeable, entertaining partner to others, he had once proved to her. She saw other young ladies listening in raptures, almost as she had done, to his soft, silvery, honeyed speeches, and looking with admiring

eyes upon his handsome, *distinguée* person, but not a kind look or word could he spare for his unhappy wife. A low formal bow was all the recognition she received from him in public ; it was not fashionable for husband and wife to be seen conversing together there ; Lady Agnes had put forth her hand, gathered and tasted the forbidden fruit, and her eyes were opened. She had obtained a fine handsome husband, but that was all — she had married a man without heart or feeling.

It was the last week in May that Edmund and Edith arrived in London after their short wedding tour, when the former said, “ Now, my dear girl, I should like to show you a little of town life.”

“ Which,” she added playfully, “ I have no wish to see, dear Edmund, or it may perhaps spoil my love for the country.”

“ Well, Edith, as I think there is no risk of that, we may as well spend a few days here and see some of my friends, to whom you have not been introduced. All the world is in London now, and I should like

to know also how poor Agnes gets on with her fashionable husband. *You* can call and see her, although I cannot."

Accordingly, the next day, Edith anxious to see her friend, probably the only time for many months, called upon her at the unfashionable hour of twelve, wishing to find her at home. She was at once admitted, and there sat Lady Agnes at her breakfast-table quite alone.

"Oh, Edith!" she exclaimed, "I am delighted to see you again, but I am sadly lazy this morning, having been at a very late party last night. I need not ask how you are, love; you look the picture of health and happiness. Are you very happy, dear Edith, happier than you ever were?"

"Could you expect a bride, dear Agnes, to answer such a question otherwise than in the affirmative? But I don't know that I am happier than I have ever been before, for nothing could exceed the happiness of the last few months of our engagement; but we are both as happy as Edmund and myself ever expected to be; we are old friends,

although a newly married couple, and have long known each other's disposition and character."

"Then, dear Edith, I conclude you are very happy, and now that you are in town you must give me the pleasure of dining here this evening."

"That I fear I cannot do, as Edmund does not know Sir Digby."

"There is no chance of his meeting my husband," Lady Agnes replied, with a deep sigh, "for he seldom dines at home, and to-night I know he has an engagement, so that I shall be quite alone."

"Yet as Edmund might object, dear Agnes, you must come and dine with us instead at our hotel, when we shall have the whole evening to ourselves."

Three weeks in town proved sufficient to give Edith a distaste for fashionable life, during which she had seen nearly everything worth seeing. She had been presented at Court by the Marchioness of Dunkerton — had been introduced at Almack's — attended the Opera and Theatres, and been at half a dozen aristocratic

balls and parties; in fact her exceeding loveliness had attracted such general admiration, that invitations poured in upon her so thickly, she was obliged to decline more than half. The beautiful Mrs. Knightley had become, without her so intending or wishing, the fashion, and no party was thought quite complete without her. Edmund felt every day more proud of his wife, and more devotedly attached to her. She would go nowhere without him. Flattery and adulation possessed no charm for her; her husband's approving smile being the only one she coveted.

The Marchioness felt more than gratified by the homage paid to her new cousin. "Well, Edmund," she remarked one evening at the Duchess of R——'s ball, where Edith was dancing with her son, "what think you now of *my choice*? Are you not the most fortunate man in the world? Can you doubt now the evidence of your senses, which were once so blinded that you could not perceive the superior attractions of that dear sweet girl, whose beauty is her least recommendation?"



“ Ah! Emily, my eyes were indeed withholden then to her many perfections, but believe me, I do feel now most thankful, most grateful, that my wilful boyish fancy was not gratified.”

“ You are the most envied man in town, Master Edmund, notwithstanding your former obstinacy, and had Edith been Miss Maxwell still, she would to my knowledge have been offered a choice of coronets. Old and young are equally in love with her; the old for her quiet unaffected manners and sensible conversation, and the young for her great personal charms. In short, she has created quite a sensation, and the old Duke of Willerby, whose taste in female beauty is considered undeniable, has pronounced her to be the most lovely and accomplished woman he has ever beheld. You may suppose, therefore, how proud I am of *my choice*, and to be able to call her cousin.”

“ Edith and myself have to thank you now, dear Emily, for all your kind attentions to us whilst in town, but as you see my dear precious girl has exchanged the

rose for the lily in her complexion, we purpose returning home the day after to-morrow, at Edith's particular request, who prefers the healthful recreations of country life to the gay, although unsatisfactory amusements of London."

"I approve her choice, Edmund, although I shall truly regret her absence, and to speak the truth," she said, laughing, "I think your position as her husband here is rather too much envied to be quite safe; so take your beautiful bride to the country, where you may enjoy every happiness without inducing others to break the tenth commandment by a longer display of your coveted treasure in such an unhallowed place as this."

A fortnight after this conversation, Edmund and Edith, after having spent ten days with Colonel and Mrs. Maxwell, were again at Woodborough Park, St. Austin's not being quite fit for their reception, and we need scarcely say with what delight their return was hailed by the Earl and Mrs. Errington.



## CHAPTER III.

WE must now pass over a period of five years, during which Sir Digby Colville had been engaged in multifarious transactions upon the turf—racing and betting having been his favourite amusements as heretofore; and with the additional income derived from his wife's property, he had become the owner of several racehorses. The turf however proved not to be Sir Digby's *forte*; he was a bad hand at book-making, and somehow or other his horses seldom won any stake worth having. He had been twice so nearly ruined by backing two favourites to large amounts, that Lady Agnes was obliged to apply to her father to save him from being openly declared a defaulter. Upon the first occasion the

Earl agreed to advance his daughter the sum required to save her husband from disgrace, on the condition that he discontinued keeping racehorses, and these terms were apparently complied with, although the horses had in reality been merely transferred to a friend, in whose name they continued to run.

The true state of the case having been at last made known to the Earl, he refused positively to aid him any further, and in consequence, Sir Digby having again become greatly embarrassed, and unable to raise another shilling upon his own property — his wife's money being properly secured from his interference with it in any shape whatever during her life-time — was at last under the necessity of making a precipitate retreat from England, and had been living for the last year and a half at a retired château in the south of France. It was here that Sir Digby, becoming impatient of his seclusion from the world, exhibited his true character by fretfulness, and frequent violent outbursts of temper

towards his still attached, though no longer deluded wife. The veil had been removed long before from the eyes of Lady Agnes. Their first season in London had shown her the worldly, selfish disposition of her husband, and his utter disregard of her comfort or domestic happiness, in which he took not the slightest interest. Lady Agnes could make excuses for him when in London — he had there so many friends, — so many engagements — here, however, no such excuses could be made, and yet she saw nothing of Sir Digby, from the hour of breakfast until that of dinner. Her husband still kept his two hunters, and she had also her carriage to take her solitary drive when so disposed.

With the old château, Sir Digby rented a large forest, on the borders of which the house stood, and here he found occupation and amusement during the season in shooting and hunting wild boar; and in the summer, he was frequently from home for weeks together, upon various excuses. They had spent the first winter together

in Paris ; but living there was so expensive that he could not afford to take her there again.

Lady Agnes had now become so dispirited, and submissive to the will of her Lord, that she was as a child, helpless, powerless in his hands. In her own room she would sit for hours, weeping and lamenting the wayward, wilful passion of her youth, in linking her fate with such a man as her husband — and yet, when a kind word was spoken by him, a seemingly interested inquiry about her health, or a regret that their limited income would not permit him to obtain for her other amusements and recreations — the tears — the forbidden tears — which by a strong effort she had been taught to suppress in his presence — would stand in her eyes, and she felt she loved him still. She continued her correspondence with Mrs. Errington, but even her letters tended only to increase her unhappy, desponding state of mind. Mrs. Errington, wrote of the faithful, devoted love of Edmund and Edith, whose

happiness appeared ever on the increase. Oh! what a contrast this to her sad, mournful, melancholy lot — loving hopelessly — despairing of any return!

Lady Agnes could barely summon courage, sometimes, to reply to these letters. What had she to communicate? She dared not even mention her husband's name, who had from his late conduct become still more offensive to the Earl. She had nothing to write about — she saw no one — knew nothing of the gay world, from which she had now, by a false step, been debarred. How she longed when a girl to see and mix in that world! How she had fretted then against her now dear old lamented Woodborough, like a linnet against the bars of its cage! How she panted to be free from all paternal restraint, and join in that giddy, thoughtless throng of the gay and dissipated! What would she give now to be once more at home, owning no other power than that of her kind, too indulgent father! What to be once more free within those walls —

once more free to wander through the haunts of her happy youth, with Edmund and Edith, the loved companions, in those cheerful walks, — and her words would often recur to her mind — “The time may come when you will look back on the days spent at dear Woodborough as the happiest of your life.” The prophecy had already been fulfilled! And another painful, heart-rending thought arose — “Shall I ever revisit dear Woodborough again?”

It was now, when shut out from the world, that the lessons of religious instruction instilled into her youthful mind began to revive. When the prospect of all earthly happiness seems cut off, it is then — perhaps, then only — that we begin to turn our thoughts on heaven. It is then that the soft whisperings of our guardian angel are heard for the first time in our thoughtless, careless lives. It is in solitude and retirement that we look up from nature to nature’s God. It is when walking in the garden, far removed from the busy hum of mankind, that we con-



temple the real beauties of creation. There we can dwell upon the wonderful construction of even the meanest flower — there consider the lilies as they grow, exhibiting in their early beauty and too early decay a true emblem of human life.

It was in the pleasure garden of the old French château that Lady Agnes now sat upon a rustic chair, day by day during the spring and summer months, occupied in studying the Book of Books, from whose hitherto neglected pages she could now derive her only comfort and consolation. It was here, when falling asleep from weariness and exhaustion of mind, that she beheld, like Jacob, a vision of angels ascending to and descending from Heaven, here she beheld one of those blessed happy spirits standing before her, with outstretched hand towards the sky, saying, “There the wicked cease from troubling — there the weary are at rest.” She awoke — was it a dream or a reality? — and the words of Jacob occurred to her mind — “Surely the Lord is in this place, and



I knew it not." That spot became hallowed ground to her ever after. Here she sat, meditated, and pondered, until her thoughts wandered to that happy land, with which Jacob's ladder was connected, and upon which she now almost longed to climb to the regions of immortality.

Alas! how true, how alarmingly true it is, that until visited with affliction — weighed down to the earth by sorrow and calamities, we seldom think seriously of God! When young we are occupied with thoughts of pleasure and amusement only — when older, with the business and cares of life; and it is only when tired and weary of earthly things that our thoughts are directed towards another home. How few consider and confess, like the Patriarchs of olden time, that we are pilgrims and sojourners here in a strange land — travellers in a foreign country, beset with dangers and difficulties on every side. How few of us take for our guide that star which once shone in the East to direct the wise men on their way to

Bethlehem, and by the light of which our footsteps can alone be upheld through this dark valley, over-shadowed by death — until the glorious light of the heavenly kingdom shall burst upon our sight.

We must now cross the channel, and attend to affairs at home. How different had been the result of that union founded upon esteem of character, and cemented by the bond of friendship! Edmund's love when he married was in its infancy. The discovery of Edith's affection for himself would have induced him, with his generous and romantic ideas, to offer her his hand, even had he no heart to give, so highly did he esteem her character, and so reluctant would he have been to consign to despair the budding hopes of this young, artless, sweet-tempered girl. But Edmund had begun to experience other feelings for her when first informed of her supposed engagement to Chetwynd. He could not bear the idea of seeing her the wife of another man. It fretted — galled — and worried

him day and night. This was jealousy — it could not then be called love.

Edmund had been deeply attached to Edith, as a brother to a sister — she was very dear to him, and he was selfish enough, sometimes, to hope she would not marry at all, — he wished her to remain Edith Maxwell, that he might still possess her friendship — pure and undivided; for if married he knew that friendship would be broken by other ties. But when assured by his sister that Edith's first love had been his, his heart bounded with delight at the prospect of making her happy for life. We have seen the result. Edmund's love had been progressive — it continued to increase to that extent that he could not now bear her out of his sight. They had been married five years — they were lovers still — all in all to each other. They were blessed with two lovely children — a boy and girl; but much as Edith loved her children, she loved her husband more.

The little Edmund, now four years old, had become the great pet of the aged Earl,

for Edmund and Edith passed a large portion of the year at Woodborough, which was sanctified to them by early associations. Here still they would ramble together through those hallowed walks, and sit beneath the shade of that old venerated cedar, where they had first confessed their mutual love. Those had been blissful days, but only a foretaste of what they now enjoyed — that calm, serene, confiding affection which had banished all fear, jealousy and suspicion from their minds.

Edith had improved much since her marriage; from being a beautiful, lovely girl, she had now become a still more lovely woman, and although rather more dignified in manner, gentle, artless and affectionate as ever. Women are often greatly altered after marriage. I wish I could say improved, morally as well as physically — but the case is not so.

The veil of modesty is frequently thrown aside — the pure thoughts and chaste ideas of the girl exchanged for the licence and liberty of the married woman. This is

more especially the case with those who have been educated in large schools, or sent to French academies, where more attention is paid to ornamental than religious instruction — where they acquire utilitarian and worldly, in place of that true wisdom which cometh from above; for unless influenced and guided by religious principles, little faith can be placed in the integrity of man or woman. To the world they may appear honest and virtuous, but at heart what are they? *To the pure all things are pure*—and those girls who have been early taught at home, that their first duty is owing to God, will, in future life, whether single or married, still continue to walk before him in innocence and holiness of mind. Solomon says, “Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is above rubies.”

We must now see how the Shuttleworth family had been progressing during the last five years. Shuttleworth senior’s visions of ambition had been realised to a certain extent. He was a county magis-

trate, deputy-lieutenant, and member of Parliament. His speculations in railways had hitherto been successful. The Marquis had also profited largely by following his suggestions, — neither had the Captain been forgotten.

Mr. Shuttleworth now launched out into other schemes. He had become a man of consequence in the House of Commons, and his opinion on other railway projects was listened to with the greatest attention; he was even consulted by the Government upon matters of this kind. He had risen in his own estimation far above the County Party, who had treated him once with hauteur and disdain. He had his town house — gave grand entertainments, many of the aristocracy patronising him; in short, he had become a very great man indeed, and was represented as worth millions of money — everything he touched in the way of speculation being converted into gold. But his extraordinary good luck was beginning to make him careless. It gratified his vanity and ambition to



see his name in print. He was solicited to become a director and manager in other schemes, to the success of which the magic name of Shuttleworth acted as a guarantee. He had embarked very lately in a banking concern in the city, which had previously to his joining it, been thought in a tottering condition. It became renovated by his money, power and influence, and was now doing an immense business. Still he continued purchasing land anywhere and everywhere he could lay his hand upon it, within ten miles of Hardington, his ultimate object being to obtain a peerage and become one of the largest landed proprietors in the county.

Our friend Alphonso had also made rapid progress towards the perpetuation of the family name, Lady Gertrude having become the unhappy mother of three little boys and two girls, all bearing a strong resemblance to Grandmamma Shuttleworth, in obesity and rotundity of person; in short — and they were very short for their age — they were as plump and round as



little apple dumplings. Lady Gertrude did not like children, even her own — she never was fond of noisy little brats, whose proper place was in the nursery — they interfered with her amusements; — but grand-mamma doted upon them.

At first, Lady Gertrude positively refused to live under the same roof, even for a few days, with Mrs. Shuttleworth — whom she designated amongst her friends as an odious, vulgar woman; but when Alphonso's papa became a great man, and a member of Parliament, with his splendid mansion, &c., in B—— Square, Lady Gertrude condescended to accept apartments there for the London season, and Mr. Shuttleworth, proud of his daughter-in-law, kept her in good humour by magnificent presents of jewelry, and money whenever she required any little assistance — and to confess the truth, Lady Gertrude was, as the Captain remarked, “a very expensive article to keep up, and far beyond Jack's means without an extra allowance from the governor.”

From these largesses and liberality, Lady Gertrude really began to like her papa-in-law, for she could do much more with him than his own son. She had only to ask to have, and he had also supplied her with funds to assist her two younger brothers with their promotion in the army. Lady Gertrude felt more at home in B—— Square than in her own father's house; and Mrs. Shuttleworth, being excessively fond of her grandchildren, never interfered with their mother in any of her arrangements, in visiting and receiving company, the greater part of her time being occupied in the nursery.

Our friend Jack meanwhile kept his cab and park hack, belonged to a fashionable club in St. James's Street, and to use the Captain's expression, "cut a great swell among the nobs." During the season, Duncombe took up his residence in London, from whence he attended all the principal race-courses, having now become a well-known character on the turf, and doing a good business in the betting line, his

chum, Jack, in attempting to follow his example, doing the reverse. The Captain, having taken a very convenient lodging in the immediate vicinity of B—— Square, found his knife and fork always laid out for him when the Shuttleworths dined at home ; and he had also become a favoured attaché to Lady Gertrude, attending her to the opera, and other public places of amusement, whilst Jack was amusing himself in localities not less celebrated, as the resort of snobs and men of very lax morality ; — for Jack preferred being considered a great man in a coal cellar rather than a little man in a drawing-room.

Alphonso did not fancy being tolerated in the aristocratic circle to which he had obtained access through his wife. He felt amongst them as a fish does out of its proper element ; in short, Lady Gertrude, finding she could do nothing with him, left him to follow his own devices and pursuits, regarding him pretty much in the same light as her footman — a necessary

appendage to her establishment;— or in a higher grade, as her house steward— since her ladyship left the direction of household matters entirely to her husband— Jack having to enact the part of purveyor of all things necessary for the establishment.

The Marquis of Dunkerton, after three years probation with the horn, having made the discovery that he possessed neither the ability, temper, nor patience to become a first class huntsman, had prudently resigned this unpleasant and invidious office in favour of his whipper-in and kennel huntsman, Dick, greatly to the comfort of his supporters in the field, who had, during his noviciate, been treated to an over abundance of *damson pie*.

No other changes had occurred in that neighbourhood worth mentioning, since we left the portals of Woodborough House five years ago.

## CHAPTER IV.

IT is in the month of April we return to Woodborough again. We are once more the guest of the hospitable Earl. It is the breakfast hour. Edmund and Edith are reading their letters. One in an unknown hand has just been opened by Mrs. Errington, who has scarcely glanced over the first few lines, when, a faint scream escaping her lips, she falls back senseless in her chair. Edmund and Edith are by her side in a moment, rendering every assistance, when Mrs. Errington, slowly recovering, said in a low tone — “Dear Edith, come with me to my room.”

They ascend the staircase in silence, but when safe within her own apartment, Mrs. Errington, bursting into tears, exclaimed,

“ Oh ! Edith ! my poor child is no more ! ”

The truth flashed directly across Edith's mind that she alluded to Lady Agnes, whose last letter, received more than a month ago, was written when suffering from illness and great depression of spirits. We need scarcely add that Edith's kind heart was filled with the deepest sorrow for the untimely fate of her early friend, and her tears mingled with those of Mrs. Errington. Both wept long and bitterly until their overcharged hearts had become somewhat relieved from the deadening shock by which they had at first been overpowered.

“ Oh Edith ! ” Mrs. Errington said, “ how can we break this sad, sad news to the poor Earl ? I dread the effect it may produce upon him. ”

“ I will speak to Edmund, dearest Mrs. Errington, when I am a little more composed myself, and he will break it by degrees gently to our dear old friend. Oh ! what a dreadful blow it will be to him, his

once dearly loved only child!" and poor Edith again burst into tears.

"Edith — dear Edith," Mrs. Errington said, "you must try to suppress your grief now—see Edmund at once, my dear, give him the letter when you are out in the garden together—it will be better there."

Edmund did not express such great surprise, as Edith imagined, when made acquainted with the cause of her deep sorrow; for, as he handed the letter to Mrs. Errington, the foreign post mark caught his eye, and from her sudden fainting he surmised the fatal truth. Still, with his beloved wife, he could not for some time suppress his grief.

"It is my duty now," he said, "my own dearest Edith, to apprise my poor old friend of this mournful event, and we must of course remain at Woodborough until he is a little recovered from the shock of this bereavement, although I believe like myself he suspects what has occurred."

We will not attempt to depict the sorrow of the bereaved father when apprised of



the death of his only child. Deep heart-felt grief such as his cannot be portrayed; but in this hour of sore trial and distress, Edmund was his greatest comfort, and *he* also felt most acutely for the once dearly beloved companion of his youth. The Earl had, however, other little comforters around him, in Edmund's children, especially the boy, whom he loved with quite parental fondness; and the child in return never felt more happy than when sitting on his knee, delighting the old man with his joyous smile and innocent prattle.

The Earl, after his interview with Edmund, had retired to his own room, there to weep and pray in retirement, when little Edmund entering, and seeing tears rolling down his cheeks, as he sat in his old arm chair, crept quietly to his side, and raising his little cherub face to his, said in a soft touching tone—"Is dear Grandpapa very ill?"

"My boy — my darling boy!" the old man exclaimed, taking him in his arms. "Yes, dear child, I am very ill to-day—but

you remind me I have another tie to this wretched world."

"Dear Grandpa won't die," the child continued, "and leave dear Mamma and Papa, and little Edmund all alone?" and he burst into tears, clinging round the old Earl's neck.

"Oh no! my darling child—I trust not yet—I may pray, for their dear sakes and yours, to be spared a few years longer."

The letter adverted to, containing the intelligence of Lady Agnes's death, was written by Sir Digby Colville, lamenting in the most sorrowful strain the irreparable loss he had sustained by the premature decease of his young and affectionate wife, which had occurred after a few days' illness, and at her last request he was now on his return to England with her remains, to be deposited in the family vault at Woodborough!

We will pass over the intervening time, spent by the Earl and his household in deep sorrow, until the arrival of Sir Digby, with the melancholy cortége, who was re-

ceived by Edmund with as much courtesy as he could bring himself to observe towards one for whom he had ever entertained the greatest contempt, and whom the wretched fate of Lady Agnes had made him now regard with still greater aversion than before. For Edmund, knowing how unkindly she had been treated, and how neglected by this heartless man of the world, attributed her death to his unfeeling conduct.

The funeral was conducted in a strictly private manner; and prejudiced as Edmund had been against Sir Digby, he was not prepared for such deep humiliation and contrition as he exhibited upon this mournful occasion; his pale face, trembling lips, and excessive agitation betokening the deepest emotion.

“That man,” thought Edmund, “has a heart; although deadened by worldly ideas and long indulged dissipation, he may become an altered being,—perhaps this is the only deep affliction with which he has been visited—the prodigal may be reclaimed,”

and by Edmund's invitation, he remained that evening at Woodborough, winning by his subdued manners and apparent deep grief, the good opinion of both Mrs. Errington and Edith.

The Earl, however, could not be induced to see him, even for a moment, and the next morning, Sir Digby took his departure for London, having expressed his intention of travelling on the continent in the hope of alleviating the deep anguish of mind by which he was oppressed; so leaving Woodborough for a while, we will now follow him through his subsequent career in life, with a few supplementary remarks.

Before quitting England for the continent Lady Agnes had been persuaded by her husband to make a will, by which he was to succeed to her whole property in the funds, of which, as before stated, she had the power of disposal, after her decease; and it was now his first business in town to prove her will in Doctors' Commons, as a preparatory step towards obtaining a transfer of her money into his own name.

Through a well paid, clever solicitor, an arrangement was made with his creditors, (before they were aware of the amount of funds to which he had now become entitled) on a very satisfactory scale, so that in a short time Sir Digby might once more be seen in public without fear of arrest.

Pending these transactions, the worthy baronet again disappeared from London, as secretly as he had arrived there; in fact none of his anxious friends of the Jewish persuasion knew of his having been there at all—his solicitor representing him as still living abroad. For many months, nothing was heard of the once fashionable Irish baronet, until in the following May he once more appeared on the London stage of life, like a butterfly emerging from its dormant state into new life and gaiety, more than twelve months having elapsed since the decease of his wife.

It was, however, remarked by all his former friends and acquaintances that Sir Digby had become an altered man. He was grave and thoughtful, and painfully

sensitive to any observation made about his late wife. He eschewed gambling, betting and playing — even to a game at cards, and in place of being the *seeker*, he was now *sought* as a desirable *parti*.

“Well, Dunkerton,” the Captain remarked one evening, “your friend Colville has come out in a new phase, or rather like Proteus in a different shape — but I see through the disguise — he is trying to get hold of another heiress — Miss Aubrey, whose mother is a Catholic, and I should not be in the least surprised to hear that Colville had changed his faith, if he ever possessed such a thing as religious faith, as I overheard him telling Mrs. Aubrey last night that his family had formerly professed that creed.”

“Well, Duncombe, I have sometimes thought of turning Roman myself. It is a much more comfortable form of religion than the Protestant, and absolution is a very easy mode of getting rid of a heavy debt of sin, such as mine.”

“True, Dunkerton, as to the mode —



but then follows that little objectionable monosyllable *if*—yes, if a man is fool enough to believe all those priests would cram down his throat—and if he is such a fool, perhaps he is as much to be envied as pitied. Colville, however, would just as soon turn Jew as Catholic—all modes of faith being equally indifferent to him; but the women seem to think he is half a saint already. ‘Poor man!’ the Countess of D—— exclaimed the other night, ‘how Sir Digby mourns the loss of his pretty young wife. He looks the picture of melancholy!’”

“Well, Duncombe, you must confess he is greatly changed both in appearance and conduct, and I really believe the death of Lady Agnes has made a very serious impression upon him.”

“And I suppose,” added the Captain, “that, having once tasted the bliss of married life, he is bent now upon a second trial of it—or rather, that having feathered his nest well by the first venture, he is now



about to try his luck again with a second shuffle."

The surmises of the Captain proved not very wide of the mark, since Sir Digby had already made a very favourable impression on Miss Aubrey, who as to character, disposition and personal charms was the very reverse of the unfortunate Lady Agnes; Miss Aubrey being rather short in stature, her features, although regular and handsome, pale as alabaster, and her natural disposition unimpassioned and phlegmatic — exhibiting no outward sign or semblance of those feelings by which she was actuated; she admired Sir Digby Colville rather from an excess of vanity, because he appeared to possess the same characteristics as herself, and the worthy Baronet upon a very short acquaintance having discovered her *penchant* for the grave and demure, adapted his conversation and conduct to her requirements.

Miss Aubrey, however, was not, like Lady Agnes, in love with his handsome

person and agreeable manners at first sight—she was not the person to be wooed and won in a hurry. Sir Digby had a long, tedious game to play—he was obliged to proceed cautiously and systematically. The mother's good opinion must also be gained as well as that of her daughter, for a deep attachment existed between them; Mrs. Aubrey being a widow and excessively fond of this her only child. Sir Digby talked religion with her, and sentimentality with her daughter, to such an extent, and with such apparent earnestness, that both believed him sincere.

Mrs. Aubrey and her daughter both attended the Roman Catholic chapel. Sir Digby, having thrown out several hints about his family being of that persuasion, and also that, having lived a good deal abroad, he had often attended their places of worship, was politely offered a seat in their pew when he felt disposed to occupy it, which he had done now for several Sundays; and Mrs. Aubrey, like a zealous Catholic, ever anxious to obtain proselytes,

requested their priest and father confessor, whom he had met several times at her house, to call upon Sir Digby, and use his influence in converting him to Mother Church, by adopting the religion of his forefathers.

Now Mr. O'Donnell was, like Sir Digby, an Irishman, and one of good family also. He was about Sir Digby's own age, quite as gentlemanly in manners, very agreeable, much more learned and clever, and to speak the truth, quite as gay at heart as the Baronet. We will not enter upon the arguments used by Catholics, nor the texts quoted from the New Testament in support of their creed; it may suffice to state that O'Donnell taking these for his sermons, preached thereon at various times, with such effect, apparently, that at length Sir Digby confessed himself a convert to his arguments, and expressed his intention of returning to the faith of his ancestors. Yet in truth the arguments of the priest exercised a very faint influence over his mind, in comparison with those of Miss

Aubrey, who, like a moth hovering round a candle, had at last burnt her wings—and how often do we find girls, and even women of sound sense and discretion, entrapped in this net of their own weaving! They treat open flattery and adulatory compliments with disdain, but there is another kind of flattery to which they readily become victims—deferential regard to their own opinions—or conversion through their influence, from a state of bondage to sin, to that of slavery to themselves. From becoming a convert to her religious opinions, Sir Digby in turn, converted Miss Aubrey, gradually and almost imperceptibly, into an admission of reciprocating his sentiments; in short she was not aware of the dangerous weapon she had been using, until it had pierced her own heart; for upon due examination she found her convert reigning there, and secure of his position. Miss Aubrey consented to become his wife, on the condition that her lover first became a member of the Roman Catholic Church, to which an

assent being given, he was received by Mrs. Aubrey with joy as her accepted son-in-law. Matters had progressed thus far most satisfactorily, and the other necessary preliminaries having been adjusted, the day was fixed for the marriage ceremony, and their engagement being no longer a secret, a short time after, the following announcement went the round of the London and country papers, under the usual heading of "Marriage in High Life."

"On Saturday last, Sir Digby Colville, Bart., led to the hymeneal altar the beautiful and accomplished Miss Aubrey, only daughter of Mrs. Aubrey, of G—— Square, and Pennington Park, Lancashire. The ceremony was performed at the Roman Catholic Chapel in Warwick Street; the worthy baronet having very recently become a convert to the religious tenets of his most charming and wealthy bride."

## CHAPTER V.

ABOUT a month after the announcement of Sir Digby Colville's second marriage, which created no trifling sensation both at Woodborough and St. Austin's, Edmund and Edith were sitting together at their breakfast table, when the letter bag was brought in, upon opening which, Edmund's eyes became riveted upon one so intensely for a few moments, that Edith could not forbear noticing his looks of surprise and agitation.

"That hand writing," exclaimed Edmund "surely it cannot be! — yet look, my dear Edith — you know it better than myself."

"Good heavens! Edmund, it is indeed that of poor Agnes—I cannot be mistaken."

“Break the seal then, my love—I cannot;—it must have been written previously to her death. How strange I have not received it before!”

Edith did as directed, with trembling fingers; for the handwriting of those we have loved, and who have been removed by the hand of death from us, causes a painful pang through the heart. On looking hurriedly over the first few lines, she exclaimed, “Oh, Edmund, my own dear Edmund, Agnes still lives! Thank God for this wonderful mercy. Her letter is dated the very day of that wretch’s false marriage with another.”

“Gracious Heaven!” cried Edmund, springing to his feet in boundless amazement. “Is it possible? What a monster of iniquity that smooth-tongued villain must be;—but read, Edith—read, and tell me what she says,” as he stood leaning over his wife’s chair.

“Her hand-writing is very tremulous—I can scarcely decipher it.”

Edith read as follows:—



“ My dear Edmund,

“ Should this letter reach your hands, which I fear it never may, I implore you, as the friend and companion of my happier days, lose not a moment in coming to my rescue from this dreadful place—for alas ! I am a prisoner here. My husband left me six months ago, nor have I heard from him once, and ever since his departure I feel I have been under the *espionage* of his two French servants, who are on the watch day and night to prevent my escape, or holding communication with any one. I have not received a letter from home or dear Edith, for more than twelve months, and I know not, therefore, whether my kind father is still living, or what has become of dear Mrs. Errington. Sir Digby told me I need not expect to hear from home again, after my last application for money. Oh, Edmund ! I am sadly altered, you will scarcely know me again—but I am indeed, thanks to God, changed in heart and feeling also. Oh, come as soon as you receive this letter, and save me—

for I fear the worst—I may be removed to some other place.

“Your broken-hearted

“AGNES.”

“Oh! Edmund,” exclaimed Edith, “what can we do to save poor Agnes, if indeed still alive?”

“Do, my beloved? I must leave home this very day and travel with all speed, to prevent some fearful tragedy, since she evidently fears an untimely end from her jailors, who are in the pay of this infernal scoundrel.”

“And you, my own dearest Edmund, what may not befall you in attempting her rescue. We have never yet been separated since our marriage. Oh! Edmund, should you not return, your Edith could not survive you.”

“Edith, my own darling Edith, do not unman me now,” he replied, pressing her to his breast. “I will not—must not leave you, if you wish me not to go, but that Almighty God in whom we both trust, will

of his goodness restore me to you again. I go, dearest Edith, where my sense of duty calls me, I go to bring back the penitent to her father's house — to restore an only child, mourned and lamented as dead, to a parent's arms, to gladden once more the heart of the dear kind-hearted old Earl, my second father. Should I not go, my own precious girl, on such an errand of mercy and charity as this even for a stranger? much more for the loved friend of our early days?"

"Yes, Edmund, indeed you ought — no selfish feelings shall again rise to my lips, in such a case as this;—go, my own dearly beloved husband, do as your own generous nature prompts you, and I will pray and put my trust in God's mercy to restore you to me again in safety, as well as poor Agnes."

"Then, dear Edith, it is best to go at once—every hour may be of consequence—but you must not tell the Earl or Mrs. Errington the errand on which I am going. It may be a fruitless one, poor Agnes may

indeed be no more — and this would cause my dear old friend a renewal of grief, reopen the wound now nearly healed. Let me secure his child first, if still living, and I doubt not this can easily be effected. Her heartless husband there is of course no chance of meeting. He is too much occupied with his new victim to venture near the château, and I will obtain sufficient assistance from the authorities of the nearest town, to obtain her release without much trouble. So you have no danger to dread on my account, and I shall take my faithful servant with me, so now, my beloved Edith, let me prepare for my journey.”

That same afternoon Edmund left home with the stalwart Thomas, now his valet and confidential servant, both well provided with arms and ammunition in case of meeting with resistance, using all dispatch in travelling day and night to the place of their destination, the town of A——, within twelve miles of the old château in which Lady Agnes was now kept a prisoner.

Here Edmund had an interview with the Prefect of Police, briefly telling his story, and explaining his object, when, after a short delay, he was accompanied by that functionary and two of his assistants.

As the carriage drove up the long avenue through which the approach led to this gloomy old mansion, embowered among lofty trees, the cracking of the postilions' whips, caused every inmate to rush to the windows.

"It is my lor' Colville," exclaimed Pierre Dupont, hurrying to unfasten the hall door, at which he stood bareheaded, ready to receive his expected master. But great was his surprise and consternation, when the Prefect of Police, springing from the carriage,—the blinds of which had been partly let down, to screen him and Edmund from view,—told him he was his prisoner. Resistance being out of the question, he was ordered instantly to conduct them to the apartments of Lady Agnes. But she, hearing Edmund's voice, sprang like lightning down the stairs, and fell senseless in his

arms; and Edmund, as he held the once blooming and beautifully rounded, but now pale, attenuated form of her he had so fondly loved, overcome by the sad contrast, could not suppress his tears.

A little French girl, now her sole attendant, ran quickly to the assistance of her mistress with eau de Cologne and water, by which she was soon revived, having been carried by Edmund to a sofa in an adjoining room.

“Oh! Edmund!” she exclaimed, “dear kind Edmund, you have come to save your undeserving, unhappy Agnes. I feared I should never again behold any one dear to me, or revisit my native land. But God in his mercy has heard my prayers, and sent you to my relief. But oh! is my dear kind father still alive?”

“And well, dear Agnes,” taking her thin trembling hand in his. “All your friends were well when I left home.”

“Thank heaven!” she ejaculated fervently, “for this unmerited blessing. Oh! how far, far above my deserts.”



“You have not much time to spare now, dear Agnes,” Edmund said gently, “and when sufficiently composed, we will go. Thomas can assist your servant in packing up your things; but take only your own, and what you absolutely require, for the carriage will not contain many packages.”

“Oh, let us go directly,” Agnes said impatiently, her thoughts brought back to the object of Edmund’s journey, “let us go, or he may return and prevent me.”

“No, Agnes, you need not fear your husband, he will not interfere.”

“Is he dead, then?” she asked anxiously.

“No, dear Agnes; though for your sake I wish he had been; he is too much occupied with his pleasures to come here now—but we can talk of these things on our journey.”

“Yes, dear Edmund, I will not ask you any more questions; for oh! how I long to leave this gloomy, dreaded place.”

Within an hour, Edmund, with Lady Agnes, and her little French servant girl, who would not leave her mistress, were



seated in the carriage on their return home. From the weak state of his companion, Edmund wished to remain at the old town of A—— the first night, but Lady Agnes entreated him to proceed further, as long as daylight lasted, in dread of being followed by her husband, of whom she could not conceal her great apprehension, by keeping the blinds down on her side of the carriage, lest she might by any chance meet him on the road.

“My dear Agnes,” Edmund said, seeing her continued agitation and excitement on this account, “I shall be seriously offended if you give way any longer to these useless fears and anxieties. Your husband is, to my certain knowledge, in Lancashire, at a friend’s house, and I will vouch for his not appearing to obstruct you ; I will answer also, that if you met him, he would only recognise you, if he did at all, by one of his polite bows.”

“Is he lost then to all sense of feeling and honour?”

“No, he has not lost what he never

possessed; he is the same heartless villain he ever was, but pray do not allude to him again. The mention of that man, and his infamous, murderous conduct towards you renders me quite savage. Forgive me, dear Agnes," he said, observing her deep sorrow, and taking her hand in his, "if I have inflicted upon you any unnecessary pain — but until we reach home let us dismiss this unpleasant subject — only on my honour you are safe from him; so draw up the blind and let down the window, to admit this fresh balmy air, of which you stand so much in need."

Relieved of needless apprehensions by Edmund's positive and repeated assurances, Lady Agnes began soon to recover some degree of composure. The rapid motion of the carriage — the new scenery through which they passed — the variety of objects on and near the road, all these conspired to cheat her of her melancholy thoughts, and inspire her with fresh spirits. The heavy, crushing weight of hopeless despair had been removed from her mind, and

freedom from those gloomy prison walls of the old château — from which she had feared never to escape with life — made her feel light and even cheerful, if not happy. Still she was very weak in body; and Edmund, now secure of his prize, would not permit her to be hurried unnecessarily through the remaining part of their journey.

“ We will now take things more quietly,” Edmund said gaily, on the evening of their second days’ travelling; “ there is no need to hurry, and to confess the truth, I feel nearly knocked up myself; so we will rest here to-night, and I will send Edith a few lines, to which you can add a postscript if you like; but don’t write to your father or Mrs. Errington, as I wish to give them a joyful surprise, since neither know of my having gone to bring you home, and Edith is not to divulge the secret until our return.”

From the heat of the weather, Edmund deemed it prudent, on account of his companion’s weak state, to travel by easier

stages ; and the change of air and scene had effected considerable improvement in her health and looks, when they reached this last resting place on French soil, before setting sail for the white cliffs of Old England. Their passage across the channel was quick and easy ; the sea being unusually calm, with just sufficient breeze to waft them over ; and on reaching Dover, Edmund immediately set forward with four English posters, to travel with all speed to London.

They were within five miles of the metropolis, when a travelling chariot passed them at a furious rate, drawn also by four horses, the blinds being down ; but as it was whirled by, a puff of wind blowing the silken curtain aside, the features of Sir Digby Colville reading a letter, were revealed to Edmund, who was sitting forward on the right side of the carriage, Lady Agnes leaning back upon the cushion.

“ Ah ! ” thought Edmund, “ thou false villain, thou art now too late ; thy victim has escaped — we are on British ground — and

I have that paper with me which shall consign thee to a gaol, if thou dare follow here; still, to avoid a scene, I will hasten on with all speed; he may hear at Dover of our arrival there, but he cannot overtake us then, even if he make the attempt."

As they stopped to change horses at the first stage out of London, on the Great Northern road, where the day coach had just drawn up, Edmund heard a well-known voice at the carriage window.

"Ah! Edmund! how do, old fellow? boxed up pretty close, I see; but let down the window, my boy,—I've a word for your ear."

Refusal being out of the question, Edmund did as desired, when the Major, catching sight of Lady Agnes, reeled back as if shot.

"Eh! 'pon my life—is it—can it be? or am I dreaming? No, by gad, Sir, it is really Lady Agnes—come to life again, by gad!" but before the last words had passed his lips, Edmund shouted out, leaning from the window, "Forward, my lads,

as fast as you can go ; good-bye, Townshend — keep this secret until we meet again.”

But the secret was too great — too marvellous to be confined within his own breast, and being engaged to dine that evening with a large country party at Lord Dunkerton’s, out it came at the dinner-table as thus :

“ Well, Townshend,” the Marquis asked, “ what news from the provinces ? ”

“ That, by gad, my Lord, which will make your hair stand on end, as it did mine to-day.”

“ Indeed ! ” something more strange than usual, I suppose ; your stories are always wonderful.”

“ All I have ever told, Dunkerton, are as milk and water to this ; now, whom do you think I saw this very day, travelling post haste with Edmund Knightley down to Woodborough ? ”

“ Well, it would be nothing wonderful for him to be seen travelling with his wife, for they are always together, in public and private ; although it would be a wonder to



see some husbands I could mention anywhere with their wives ; — but I am a bad hand at guesses, so let us know, without further parley, who this wonderful companion was ? ”

“ Lady Agnes Colville ! ”

“ Good God, Sir,” exclaimed the Marquis, dropping his knife and fork on his plate, and springing back from the table in violent agitation as if he had seen her ghost. “ Come, come, Townshend,” his face as pale as the table cloth, “ this won’t do ; joking on such a serious matter.”

“ Joking, my Lord ! I am *not* joking, but I swear as surely as I see your face at this moment, so surely did I behold that of Lady Agnes this very day, in his travelling carriage, with Edmund Knightley, as we stopped to change horses at Barnet. Edmund let down the window to speak to me, and I had a full opportunity of scanning her features, — she is greatly changed — thin, pale and haggard — but I will swear to her identity.”

“ Saw double, I suspect, Townshend,” the



Captain said, observing the Marquis's consternation.

"I saw single and clear enough, Duncombe; at first I thought myself under a delusion, and I rubbed my eyes well to be sure it was not from defect of vision; but to settle that matter, I will bet you and every man at table fifty pounds round that I saw Lady Agnes, as I state, this very day. By gad, Sir, I'll take my solemn oath, it is as true as that I am sitting at this table."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Marchioness, "are you not deceived yourself, Major Townshend, by somebody resembling Lady Agnes?"

"On my honour, I assure your Ladyship, I have not been deceived; I had sufficient time to examine her features thoroughly, although she leaned back to screen them from me — and as I live, so is that unfortunate ill-used woman amongst the living souls of this villainous world, and God knows I speak the truth."

There was a dead silence as the Major pronounced these last words, in a solemn,

serious tone ; not even a knife and fork was moving ; amazement being depicted upon the face of every guest, who sat almost breathless with anxiety to hear more of this extraordinary story.

“ Oh ! what a Bluebeard ! ” exclaimed Lady Gertrude Shuttleworth, “ what will become of that poor, pale little thing, Miss Aubrey, whom he has so lately married ? ”

“ What a monster of depravity ! ” added the Countess of C——. “ What an escape my poor Charlotte has had ! ”

But amid all the varied exclamations of this kind from his guests, the Marquis maintained unusual gravity, merely muttering to himself, “ What a confounded fool ! ”

It is almost needless to state, that the news of this extraordinary event spread like wildfire through the west end of London during that night and the following day ; and, as a matter of course, quickly found its way into the newspapers.

## CHAPTER VI.

WE must now follow our travellers to the end of their journey, St. Austin's, where they were rapturously received by Edith, who had been watching day by day in restless anxiety for their return. At last the carriage was seen approaching by the lower drive from the drawing-room window, at which she had sat for hours together lately, to catch the first sight of her beloved husband; and without waiting for bonnet or shawl, Edith rushed to the hall door, and was once more clasped in Edmund's arms.

Her reception, also, of Agnes was little less affectionate; for she had heard of her deep dejection and contrition, and could now welcome her as a friend indeed, with whom she could have some community of

feeling; since Agnes had become not less changed in ideas than in personal appearance.

As yet Edmund Knightley had carefully concealed from her knowledge the infamous conduct of her husband with regard to her supposed death, or his second marriage with another, fearing the effect such heartlessness might produce upon her debilitated constitution; but intending by degrees to break this distressing intelligence, when she should become more strong in body and mind, and feel once more at home in her father's house.

It was his first business now to acquaint the Earl with the astounding information of his long mourned child being still in existence, and he felt the difficulty of the task he had to perform; but it could not well be delayed beyond the first night of her reaching St. Austin's. We find him accordingly early the next morning on his road to Woodborough, and need not say how joyfully he was received by the old peer.

“ Well, Edmund,” he said, “ I suppose I must not be angry with you, for leaving your old Uncle so suddenly, without a word of explanation, and Edith during your mysterious disappearance has been equally uncommunicative; in short all that she would tell me amounted to this, that you had been sent for most unexpectedly to visit a very dear friend in France, on very particular business, and that I must await your return to know more of this unlooked-for call.”

“ You have heard the truth, my dear Uncle, from Edith’s lips, but the person I went to see is equally dear to her as to myself, and I am happy to say this friend returned with me last night to St. Austin’s. She is about Edith’s own age, and having married early in life one of the greatest reprobates that ever existed, was deserted by him some months ago, and left in a foreign land, at an obscure and lonely place, far removed from friends and acquaintances, and without a shilling to find her way home. To me, as the friend of

her youth and dear Edith's husband, she wrote an imploring letter, for succour and assistance, and you may suppose our mutual surprise on receiving it, not having seen or heard from her for nearly two years — so that we believed she had been consigned to an untimely grave, and even her own husband reported her as dead."

"Oh! Edmund," exclaimed the old man, "how merciless, how more than heartless, must that man be who could desert a young and unsuspecting wife in this cruel manner! How like, I fear, to the fate of my poor lost child! We know not what miseries, what deprivations she underwent, and died perhaps at last from a broken heart."

The bereaved father groaned heavily as he spoke these words, and the tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks.

"Might not poor Agnes, my dear Uncle," Edmund said gently, "have been misrepresented as dead, like Edith's young friend, by her villainous husband, to get possession of her money? Might not this

scoundrel have fabricated the story solely for this purpose ? ”

“ Oh, no ! Edmund,” the Earl said mournfully—“ the funeral—the coffin—alas ! alas ! it is all too true ! —will the grave give up its dead ? None but God can restore to life the inanimate corpse, and the time for such miracles has passed away. Why harrow up my agonised feelings afresh by a reference to that melancholy scene ? Why re-open the wound in my still aching heart ? Oh, no ! Edmund, I shall go to her, but she will not return to me.”

“ Are we quite sure, my dear Uncle, that your lamented child has ever been the tenant of that grave ? God is very merciful, He brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes manifest the secret machinations of the wicked. ‘ His way is in the sea, His paths in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.’ The sons of Jacob showed to their father the blood-stained vestments of his favourite child Joseph, whom he mourned and lamented as



slain by wild beasts; but many years afterwards, we read of that father exclaiming, 'It is enough—Joseph my son is yet alive.' ”

“ Oh, Edmund,” the Earl exclaimed wildly, as his lips quivered and his aged frame shook from excessive agitation,—“ You speak in mysteries — what am I to think?—what believe?—relieve me from this agony of suspense. You would not deceive me—to what does all this tend ? ”

“ To prepare you, my dear Uncle, to adore the merciful dispensations of the Almighty, in the restoration of your only child ! ”

The Earl, falling upon Edmund's neck, burst into tears. They flowed fast and long before he could give utterance to these words : “ How good is God ! How much more merciful than I deserve ! ”

“ Yes, my dear Uncle, indeed He is good ! Dear Agnes still lives—and oh ! how thankful am I, to have been the instrument in God's hands of restoring her to you again ! But she is much changed, my dear friend ; sorrow has humbled her spirit, and care

has blanched her cheek. Her nerves have been dreadfully shattered by all she has undergone, so you must not tell her what has happened here, or of her worthless husband's second marriage. The shock would be too much in her weak and nervous state; but when stronger, Mrs. Errington can break it to her by degrees."

"Yes, my dear Edmund, we will be very careful—but now let me hasten to bring back my poor suffering child to her father's house."

"Come then, my dear Uncle, will you order the carriage, whilst I see Mrs. Errington."

To Edmund's surprise, his communication did not excite so much astonishment as he had imagined it would, for Mrs. Errington had gleaned sufficient from Edith during his absence to surmise the truth, although she had carefully concealed it from the Earl.

"You bring joyful news, dear Edmund," she said, as he entered the drawing-room, "which your guileless, warm-hearted Edith has led me to anticipate, although she

would not betray your secret. You have returned, with my poor, ill-used, unfortunate child; and oh! how earnestly have I prayed, since I guessed the object of your journey, that you might both return in safety. Poor dear Agnes is sadly changed, I fear;—yet better—far better, if God so wills, to die in peace at home than as a deserted stranger in a foreign land.”

“With your kind, tender care, dear Mrs. Errington, I trust she will soon recover; but let no allusion be made in her presence to the villainy of her husband. You must fortify her mind to endure this sore trial, when strong enough to bear its disclosure; for I fear she still entertains some lingering regard for the heartless destroyer of her peace and happiness. His depravity is only equalled by his plausibility, and I confess at that mock funeral, notwithstanding my previous impressions, his conduct induced me to form a more favourable opinion of him; but now that the mask is completely removed, one cannot conceive a more hideous, horrible character. This

mock funeral was got up solely for the purpose of obtaining the money belonging to his wife, which he claimed immediately after her supposed death, and spent in paying his debts, to be again let loose upon society; and my firm impression is, that believing poor Agnes to be in a declining state of health, he intended she should end her days in that old château, whether naturally or unnaturally I will not now say, but may tell you more another day, as the Earl must of course be very impatient to set out for St. Austin's."

The meeting of a father and child, under such circumstances as we have related, may be supposed most affecting, and there is a silence more expressive than words, when the heart is too overcharged with deep feelings of sorrow or joy to give utterance to its strong emotions. Lady Agnes fell tottering into her father's outstretched arms, and as the old man held her attenuated form to his heart, his tears fell fast over the neck of his almost insensible daughter.

There were no witnesses to this affecting scene, for Edmund and Edith having silently withdrawn from the room, father and child remained alone,—no third person could intermeddle with their grief, no eye, save One, beheld their tears, or heard, when utterance was given her, the outpourings of the stricken, repentant child in her father's ears.

“Oh, my too kind father!” she murmured, “can you forgive your wilful, disobedient daughter all the misery and sorrow she has caused you?”

“Hush, my poor deluded child,” he said gently, “talk not of the past—all is forgotten, all forgiven. Let us now grieve no more for what cannot be recalled, but praise God for His unexpected mercy in restoring you to me again. Come, my own Agnes, dry your tears, my sorrow is now turned into joy.”

“Oh! that the Almighty may spare me a little longer, my dear father, to prove the sincerity of my repentance, and that

I may be some comfort to you in your declining years."

"May God grant your prayer, my dear child; but now as you love me, dearest Agnes, repress your tears and sobs, which go to my heart; and dear good Mrs. Errington is waiting anxiously to clasp you in her arms."

The dreaded ordeal had passed, and Lady Agnes, now assured of her father's perfect forgiveness, felt relieved of a heavy weight of care and anxiety, which had been pressing her already humbled spirit to the earth. She was once more at home in her father's house, so changed in mind, feelings, and disposition, that none would have recognised the once haughty, wilful Lady Agnes Gerard of former days.

## CHAPTER VII.

WE must now take a short retrospect of Sir Digby Colville's conduct anterior to, and subsequent on, the mock funeral of Lady Agnes.

To a man of his pursuits and ideas, retirement in an old château was as banishment to a solitary island, for the society of his unhappy wife proved almost as bad as no company at all. There was an uncomplaining, though upbraiding, look in those tearful eyes, which sometimes struck him to the heart, as the wilful destroyer of all her happiness. He felt uncomfortable in her presence—restless, nervous, anxious, painfully anxious to drown his cares once more in dissipation.

In the absence of other women to flirt



with, Sir Digby commenced a *liaison* with his wife's lady's-maid, who was quite as handsome as her mistress ever had been, and now of course far more attractive. All the other English servants having been previously dismissed, upon the plea of poverty, and the necessity of retrenchment in every department, her carriage and horses had also been sold, and in the place of butler and footman an old French soldier, with his wife and a little girl, had been substituted, who between them did all the household work.

The amour with the pretty lady's-maid terminated as such things usually do, and in an evil hour the unfortunate girl, to avoid detection, was prevailed upon by her master to use remedies which in a few days caused her death. Nowise disconcerted by this appalling event, her heartless seducer and murderer almost immediately after devised the plan of turning the death of his victim to some account in furtherance of the project which had now gained possession of his mind. His wife's money

would fall to him after her decease, which, from her increasing debility and low spirits, he calculated upon taking place within a twelvemonth at farthest, if not earlier. He was dreadfully short of money, and felt it impossible to remain in the château much longer, where everything reminded him of his guilt. He thought he might safely anticipate in such a case, and by conveying the remains of this wretched girl to England as those of Lady Agnes, claim the long-coveted possession of her fortune. Under the pretence of paying a secret visit to Ireland to collect some rents, Sir Digby left home the day [after the coffin had been removed from the château, and conveyed to the nearest town *en route* for England, Pierre being told by his master that the friends of the deceased girl, who were highly respectable, had requested him, in case of her dying abroad, to have her remains consigned if possible to her native soil.

We have elsewhere related the success of this infamous scheme, and Sir Digby

Colville's return to London subsequent to the supposed funeral of Lady Agnes, whence after a short stay, for the purpose of proving her death and obtaining possession of her property, he again set out for the old château in France, where he was received with joy by his deluded and yet too attached wife. Lady Agnes had few correspondents, save Edith and Mrs. Errington, and it having struck her with surprise that no letters had reached her lately from home, Sir Digby assigned as the cause her father's extreme displeasure at her third application for pecuniary assistance, in which feeling, he said, no doubt Edmund Knightley participated, and had forbidden his wife to continue their correspondence.

This proved the heaviest blow poor Lady Agnes had yet received; to be deserted by the only true friends she had ever possessed—to be neglected and scorned by them in poverty and banishment—almost broke her heart. She wept long and bitterly in the retirement of her own room, and at last, thoroughly overcome by these

painful reflections, she fell upon her knees, praying earnestly for grace and strength of mind to support her in this sore trial; and it is thus, when all other sources of earthly comfort and consolation seem dried up, that we apply to that fountain of living waters which ever flows to the relief of the broken-hearted and contrite sinner. From her Bible Lady Agnes now derived support, many passages of which seemed peculiarly applicable to her own case; and it was her only pleasure to sit alone, reading those beautiful and life-giving pages she had never seriously studied until now, when affliction and sorrow had humbled her once proud spirit in the dust.

Sir Digby had passed the winter with her on his return from England, but as the spring approached he again spoke of going to London, in the hope of ultimately arranging his affairs; that at present his wife could not accompany him, it being necessary that he should remain incognito until these matters were settled. At these words hope revived in her heart — the

hope ever uppermost in her thoughts, of throwing herself at the feet of her once loved, honoured father, and imploring his forgiveness for her undutiful conduct.

Before leaving his wife the second time, Sir Digby gave certain secret instructions to Pierre Dupont about the safe custody of his lady, whom he wished until his return to remain in perfect seclusion. That no visitors were to be admitted to the château, and that he was to keep the strictest watch over her day and night, lest she might endeavour to follow him to England, where for particular reasons it would be most impolitic for her at present to appear; and these orders being backed by a round sum of money, with the promise of a larger one if strict attention were paid to his instructions, Pierre Dupont, beginning to comprehend how the matter stood, promised implicit obedience to his master's commands.

Now the fact was Pierre was no stranger to Sir Digby's true character, having been his servant some years previously when

in Paris for one entire season, and Sir Digby, having again met with him before the dismissal of his other servants, engaged his services with his wife, knowing he was just the person to suit him, as willing to execute any orders, however villainous, he might require at his hands.

"You understand, Pierre," his master said, with a meaning look, "that I wish for very particular reasons, which I will explain when we meet again, the Lady Agnes is neither to be visited by any one, nor are any letters to be received or sent by her during my absence. You will take charge of them for me."

"Je comprends, Monsieur," was the reply, with a diabolical grin.

"Any she may choose to write you will of course undertake to forward to their proper destination."

"Ah! oui; je comprends, Monsieur."

"Your little relative, Louise, will attend upon her ladyship. You will not, however, inform her of anything I tell you."



“Certainement non, Monsieur—she varra young—me no trust her.”

“There is another thing, Pierre, to be strictly observed. Her ladyship must be watched and followed by yourself at a certain distance during her walks and rambles, and should she attempt to make her escape, or go beyond the grounds, you will restrain and bring her back. Such are my orders.”

“Je comprends,” was again the short reply, and after these few directions, Sir Digby left his unfortunate wife the next morning, assuring her of his intention to return as soon as possible, and then accompany her once more to their native land; but that she must not write to him in the mean time, lest her letters might lead to the discovery of his abode in London before his business had been settled, and thus overturn all his plans.

The now subdued and miserable wife reluctantly consented to observe these hard commands of her base, worthless husband, believing implicitly in his assertions, and



accepting as true his plausible reasonings. Still, however, there was some light, although gleaming in the distance, which broke in upon her to prevent despondency and despair. "He might be absent a month or two, perhaps not so long, it might be, however, longer. Lawyers were proverbially dilatory—but she might depend upon his return immediately it was possible to do so"—and with these assurances, Lady Agnes consented without remonstrance to await patiently his return.

It was the first week in March when Sir Digby set out on his second visit to London, nearly twelve months after the supposed death of his ill-used wife, the greater portion of her money having been already spent in arranging with his creditors, so that he appeared once more a free and reported rich man in the gay circles of the metropolis. For the last eighteen months Lady Agnes had been suffering from great debility, accompanied with constant cough and severe pains in the chest; and as day by day she had become thinner,

Sir Digby gathered from these symptoms that she was gradually sinking by slow degrees from consumption, and that in all probability he should never again behold her alive. To his confidential agent, Pierre Dupont, instructions were given to write him regular bulletins of her health, and to procure for her any medicines she might require, but on no account to send for a physician, lest he might betray her place of residence.

For a month after her husband's departure, buoyed up by the hope of his speedy return, and the genial spring weather, which revives even the most drooping plants, Lady Agnes appeared improving in health; but as "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," she again relapsed into her usually low state of mind, and her nervous anxiety increased so much, that her appetite completely failed her, her cough also returned with increased violence, and she made complaints to the little Louise of the severity of the pain in her chest, which prevented her sleeping. Pierre's wife became very

assiduous in her attentions to her unfortunate lady, prescribing various little remedies, decoctions of herbs, and warm cordials at night, which afforded some relief. But the impression made upon this worthy couple was that her days were numbered, and thus about the end of May Pierre wrote his master, advising his immediate return.

This pleasing intelligence reaching Sir Digby at the period when his addresses were being paid to Miss Aubrey, put him into the highest spirits, since he now believed the chief obstacle to his contemplated marriage with a second victim would speedily be removed, and subsequent letters tended to confirm him in this opinion, Lady Agnes having expressed to her little waiting-maid her belief that she could not live through another winter.

Four months had now passed since Sir Digby's departure from France, and Lady Agnes, becoming both excited and alarmed by her husband's long absence, wrote both to Edith and a friend in London to inquire

about him. To these letters of course there was no answer. Again she addressed other former acquaintances, with the like result. Another tedious month dragged its slow length along—her suspense and anxiety could no longer be endured, and her suspicions became at last aroused. She questioned Pierre about the non-delivery of any letter from England, saying she had written to several friends, but not one answer had been received by her. Pierre merely shrugged his shoulders, declaring none had arrived; but his evasive replies to other questions roused her naturally warm temper, and she desired him to procure her a conveyance to the nearest post town, to make inquiries herself into the matter.

Pierre again had recourse to objections and evasions which Lady Agnes, now thoroughly excited, refused to listen to. She insisted upon a carriage being sent for immediately, or she would walk. The weather was fine, she would take Louise with her, and she would hire a carriage to

return. Pierre saw by her determined manner and words that the crisis had arrived for informing her of, and enforcing his master's orders, and he firmly, though quietly, told her Sir Digby's directions were that she was not to leave the château during his lord's absence.

Lady Agnes stood for a moment speechless at this information, then turning abruptly away burst into tears. The truth flashed across her mind, that she was, for some mysterious purpose, a prisoner in her own house, and all correspondence with her friends cut off. She retired to her bedroom, where, unperceived, little Louise sat silently working in a corner, and falling into a chair gave way to a violent outbreak of grief, covering her face with her hands and sobbing aloud. The young girl became touched with her mistress's distress, and falling upon her knees before her, took one of her hands and raised it to her lips.

"Oh, do not cry so, my dear lady," the girl said, in soft pitying tones, "it will

make you so very ill again. Oh! say what Louise can do to stop those tears?"

"Do, Louise?" as a sudden thought struck her, "what would you do to save my life?"

"Anything—everything—to save so kind a mistress; but" she added, in a whisper, "we must not talk here," and then in a louder tone, "Milady will take a walk, I will fetch her bonnet."

Lady Agnes understood her meaning, and believing now she had gained a friend, dried her tears and set out for a walk, accompanied, as she often was, by her little attendant. They had proceeded some short way from the house, Louise keeping at a respectful distance behind her mistress, when the young girl, looking back, perceived Pierre watching their movements; and suggested, it being a very warm day, that her lady had better rest on an old rustic seat in the pleasure ground, until the heat had abated. The hint was taken by Lady Agnes, who accordingly sought



the chair, and Louise, as usual, sat upon the ground at her feet.

“Louise,” her mistress said, “we are now alone; will you assist me? I have no friend here but you, and if you will do as I bid you, I will reward you handsomely for your services, and will provide for you as long as you live, so that, should anything befall your unhappy mistress, you shall never be obliged to enter the service of another, or work for your bread.”

“Indeed, dear lady, I will do anything I can, but Pierre is very watchful.”

“Listen then, Louise, to my proposal. I know my letters have never been sent by him, for I have written many, to which I have received no replies, and I fear your master has met with some accident, or perhaps he no longer lives.”

“He is not dead, dear lady; Pierre heard from him only yesterday.”

Lady Agnes, starting with surprise, asked “How know you this, Louise?”

“I overheard him and Madame Dupont



talking about it last night as I listened at the door before going into the room. They said it was strange my lord did not come, when he had written him so often about your being so very ill."

Lady Agnes sat lost in thought for some few moments, when the exclamation escaped her: "It is even thus, then, I am deserted by my husband; he has left me to perish here alone, a prisoner, uncared for, in a foreign land! Oh, could I have believed him so cruel, so heartless! He for whom I have sacrificed all, and every other friend in the world;"—and the tears again chased each other down her pallid, care-worn cheeks.

"Oh! don't weep so bitterly, dear lady," again interposed Louise, raising her glistening eyes to her mistress's face: "Louise will do anything you desire."

"Will you promise faithfully to do what I ask you?"

"Indeed, indeed I will, dear lady, if it be at all possible."

"Then will you take a letter for me

to the nearest post town, and place it yourself in the letter-box? You have asked me to go to-morrow to the village *fête*, three miles off; you are young and active, but I will give you money to obtain some conveyance there and back, if you think it is too far for you to walk."

"Pierre is so very suspicious," the girl remarked, thoughtfully, "he may search my pockets and find the letter; yet," she added, with childish quickness, "the lining of my bonnet—he would never think of looking there. Dearest lady, I will run the risk, and by going very early to-morrow morning, I shall have time to reach the town and return to the village *fête* before the afternoon. My uncle lives only a mile beyond, and I can get his little cart to convey me there and back, telling him I want to buy some things for you."

"Thank you, dear Louise, your plan is very good; you shall have money to buy yourself anything you wish, and to bring me a few *bon-bons* from the fair;

but now we will continue our walk under the shade of the trees."

That same evening Lady Agnes, now persuaded that her husband intended to keep her a prisoner there, for some mysterious reasons, while Pierre and his wife were engaged at supper, wrote the letter we have elsewhere alluded to, praying and entreating Edmund Knightley to rescue her. The more she dwelt upon her husband's conduct, the more heartless and suspicious it became. He could write to Pierre many letters, but not one line, not even a message, had ever been conveyed to her since his departure, now nearly five months ago. She was watched, too, and not permitted to leave the grounds. What could this mean?—why this surveillance over her? Strange misgivings seized upon her mind. She had read, in some of the old books the library contained, dark mysterious tales connected with these old sequestered mansions — of unhappy wives immured for years within their dismal walls, of murders perpetrated, which were not discovered

until many years afterwards — and this was a place sequestered and remote enough to raise up suspicions and conjure horrors in her mind, that the fate of others might be realised by herself. The fact, too, occurred to her with unpleasant reflections, that her husband had induced her to make her will in his favour before leaving England. Horror of horrors ! could he meditate her death to obtain her money ? She had been reading only the week before of a dreadful tragedy like this, which made her shudder ; and under these fearful apprehensions, her resolution was taken, to implore Edmund Knightley to come to her rescue.

The letter was hastily written, and given the following morning to Louise, with very particular instructions to post it herself, being sewn up, at her suggestion, within the lining of her bonnet. The precaution proved most fortunate, for Pierre searched both her pockets before she was permitted to leave the house. The faithful girl, now only fifteen years of age, executed her

mission with fidelity and quickness—her cousin, a lad two years older than herself, to whom she was greatly attached, driving her to the town of A——, where they delivered the letter into the hands of the postmaster, paying the postage, and obtaining from him a memorandum in writing to that effect, after which the two cousins returned to the village to enjoy the *fête*, and then in the evening to the old château, where, when alone with Lady Agnes, Louise related what she had done, producing the paper signed by the postmaster as a proof of her faith.

It was enough; Lady Agnes, charmed by her ingenuity and fidelity, caught her to her heart, and shed for the first time tears of joy at the now certain prospect of deliverance from that man whom she had so blindly and madly loved.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE last view we had of Sir Digby Colville was in his travelling chariot, going as fast as four horses could convey him towards Dover, where he purposed embarking directly for the continent. Pierre's letter had been received by him a few days previously in Lancashire, where he had been passing the honeymoon with his new bride, when seeing at a glance, from the description of his wife's liberator, that he could be no other than Edmund Knightley, and that consequently the exposure of his conduct could not be concealed beyond a very brief period, his resolution was immediately taken, to collect together all the money he could from his victim, Miss Aubrey, and fly the country. With a



plausibility and coolness peculiar to his character, he informed her that urgent business required his immediate presence in Ireland for a few days, and under pretence of having spent nearly all his ready money, his unsuspecting and fond bride offered all the cash she possessed at his disposal, and that same night his arrangements were made for leaving early the next morning for London.

Arrived there, he obtained possession of Miss Aubrey's diamonds, which had been left by her, at his suggestion, and in his company at her jeweller's, to be re-set before their marriage, drawing also a considerable sum from his bankers, on his note of hand, which was advanced in anticipation of a portion of his reputed wife's fortune, to which he was entitled; for it being now clear to Sir Digby that he could not show his face again in London for some few years at least, if ever again, he had prudently calculated upon the contingencies which might arise, and provided himself with a sufficient sum of money,



and the diamonds of great value, to enable him to travel comfortably in foreign lands until the storm now gathering over his head should have abated its violence.

Sir Digby, although exceedingly cautious in most transactions, had acted far too hastily with regard to his second marriage, having taken it as granted from Pierre's last dispatches, that Lady Agnes could not live much longer, being as he concluded in the last stage of consumption, and that in her weak state it was next to an impossibility she ever could reach her native shores, even should she escape Pierre's vigilance, without money or friends to assist her on the journey. It never entered into his calculation, after all the precautions he had taken, that she ever again could hold any communication with, or receive any succour from home, where all believed her to be long since numbered among the dead. Pierre had also informed him of the intercepted letters, so that he saw no possibility, under his supervision, of her receiving any communication whatever

from any of her relatives or friends in England.

It appearing therefore to him self-evident, that treachery had been practised by Pierre, he set out with the intention of wreaking his vengeance upon him as the subverter of his plans, to whom his disgrace and discomfiture could only be attributed. It is ever thus that the worldly-minded and depraved look to second causes, instead of the First Great Cause, by whom their machinations and evil intentions are defeated. They forget or despise that all-seeing Almighty Being, without whose permission "not a sparrow falleth to the ground."

Upon reaching Dover, Sir Digby learnt that a lady and gentleman, answering the description of his wife and Edmund Knightley had arrived that morning from Calais, and had immediately set out again with four post horses for London.

"A day too late," he muttered savagely. "I might have stopped them on French soil, and had my revenge upon that

meddling fool Knightley. Had we met, his life should have been the forfeit for this daring enterprise. We may meet again," he continued, thinking aloud, "and when we do, this insult shall be wiped out with his blood. Had Dunkerton not interfered, he would have been prevented doing me this mischief now."

Thus meditated Sir Digby, regardless of those gross irreparable injuries and insults he had heaped upon the heads of two unsuspecting, confiding women; and there are many worldlings like him, who sacrifice without compunction their wretched dupes — led astray by false protestations of love — to their own selfish unhallowed passion. To women, honour is the most precious heritage — that jewel of great value for the loss of which nothing can compensate — no penitence redeem, no tears reclaim; and yet with what cool indifference, what heartless carelessness, will men rob them of this inestimable treasure, and cast them like worthless toys away! Jealous enough of their own miscalled honour, they will at the same

time treat that of woman with indifference and even contempt, boasting of the treachery by which they have accomplished the ruin of some young artless girl! Such a man was Sir Digby Colville, who, now defeated in his vile schemes, was obliged to fly his country to avoid prosecution for bigamy.

Upon reaching the old château, he vented his wrath upon Pierre, accusing him of perfidious dealings, and receiving a bribe to liberate his wife. Pierre retorted angrily, being in this case unjustly accused. Fierce altercations and threats followed on both sides, when Sir Digby, unable to restrain his passion, caught him by the throat, shaking him as a dog would a rat, by which the Frenchman's tiger-like disposition being roused to the utmost, he drew a knife from his pocket, and stabbed his master in the side, who fell with a deep groan upon the floor, where he lay motionless, without any signs of life.

Pierre stood for a few moments contemplating the bloody work of his hands, then, shrugging his shoulders, exclaimed,

“ Ah ! I am revenged, and his lady too ! ” Then hastening to his wife, he told her what had occurred, and how he had been provoked beyond endurance, to resent the insulting treatment of his late master.

“ Perhaps he is not dead,” she said, “ let us go and see.”

“ It is useless,” Pierre replied, “ he never moved after falling. No, no, bolt the doors, we must escape, as soon as it grows dark.”

It was already evening, Sir Digby having arrived late in the day.

Pierre and his wife were at once busily occupied in collecting all the money and valuables they could find about Sir Digby, and in his portmanteau, where Miss Aubrey’s diamonds had been deposited ; Pierre’s eyes glistening with delight on discovering these precious stones, the value of which he well understood.

“ Hah ! hah ! ” he exclaimed exultingly. “ Milor Anglais pay well for keeping his secret.”

Having ransacked every vestment and

box likely to contain money or jewellery, Pierre desired his wife to dress herself in one of his suits of clothes, and as the shades of evening began to fall, they were leaving the house, when the thought struck him, that, by setting fire to the curtains of the room in which the body of Sir Digby lay, the old panels would soon be in a blaze and all traces of the murder obliterated, before assistance could arrive from the village, about three miles distant. This thought was acted upon without delay, and Pierre and his wife escaped by the back door, the key of which they took with them.

The fierce heat of the room, and crackling of the flames, roused Sir Digby from the long and fearful stupor in which he lay, for life was not extinct, and by a last effort to escape the horrible fate with which he was now threatened, the wounded man crawled to the window, the framework of which had been destroyed by the flames; and dragging himself forward, as far as his strength would permit, sank again, fainting



from loss of blood, upon the lawn, about a hundred yards from the old château, every part of which was now enveloped in one vast blaze of light.

The extraordinary illumination was at length perceived by some of the villagers, who rousing their neighbours, a cry of fire was raised, men, women, and children quickly gathering together, and with the curé at their head, all who were able, set out directly for the chateau.

The first object presenting itself to their view, was the body of Sir Digby Colville, lying apparently lifeless upon the lawn, from which it became evident to the village doctor, upon examination, that the vital spark had not yet fled. The flames were now issuing from every window of the house, Pierre having too effectually done his work, so that the prospect of saving anything from the ruins becoming hopeless, the old château was abandoned to its fate, none daring to venture within its doors.

By the direction of the doctor and curé



of the parish, the body of Sir Digby was conveyed in a litter, by four men, to the village, where he was taken to the house of the latter, and by the aid of stimulants restored to consciousness, though for some hours incapable of speaking.

“It is a hopeless case,” the doctor remarked, “he must sink, but we may rouse him sufficiently by powerful stimulants to obtain the information we desire, as to the perpetrator of this fearful catastrophe.”

That night, however, nothing could be elicited, from the heavy stupor into which he again relapsed; but on the following day, Sir Digby recovered sufficiently to give a short account of what had occurred; and from this to him great exertion he fell once more into a state of insensibility for some hours. Upon being awakened by the pain he was now enduring, and being told by the doctor that he must make the best use of the little time he had to live, he shrieked out with horror, “Am I dying, then?”

“I fear so,” replied the doctor, “al-

though a few hours more may be allotted to you—perhaps a day.”

“Oh! God of mercy,” he cried, “spare me! oh! spare me, that I may repent the grievous sins I have committed! No, no, it cannot be!—I am dreaming—not dying. Save me, Doctor,” he cried frantically, “save me from everlasting perdition! I cannot, must not die!”

“My friend the Curé will assist you there,” the doctor said, “he will give you absolution from your sins, my art can avail you no longer.”

“Do not leave me—do not go,” Sir Digby continued, imploringly.

“I will see you again in the evening, but now I must go, I have other patients to attend.”

And now the dreaded terrible reality broke for the first time on the mind of the dying man. He had scoffed at and despised religion as a well-devised system, but suitable only to weak-minded, credulous people—women and children. He had never looked into or wished to study the

Book of God. This world had been his only world. He had never given himself the trouble to inquire about that which lay beyond it ; and when listening perchance to a sermon,—a rare occurrence, for he seldom went to church,—the description given by the preacher of the joys of heaven was at direct variance with his ideas of happiness and pleasure ; there was nothing to allure a worldly, or gratify a carnal mind—not one sensual pleasure could be found in it — no gay, frivolous society—no trifling amusements—no song or dance, such as worldlings love, to enliven the borders of heaven. It was when about to approach the confines of that other unknown world—when about to appear before an insulted and despised God—that the horrors of his situation burst with overwhelming force upon his affrighted soul !

Thousands and millions like him, have lived the life, — but rare are the instances, when time for reflection has been allowed them, of any dying the death of the Deist. It is when this world is fast re-

ceding from their view,—when its frivolous amusements and pleasures can be enjoyed no longer,—when friends are powerless to render assistance,—when they must pass alone through that dark unknown valley of the shadow of death, that the ungodly look for comfort and support from the only arm which can now succour or befriend them; and were *remorse* repentance, few would die impenitent. But would we die the death, we must live the life of the righteous.

Is it the fear of punishment, or the love of God, which deters us from the commission of sins? for by this test the truth of our religion can alone be ascertained. If the love of God is not shed abroad in our hearts—if we do not detest sin—because it is the accursed thing which God abhors—we have not vital religion. And why do not we love God? Have we not, every soul of us, to consider him our nearest, dearest friend, one who will never desert us, when all others run away? It was He who watched our helpless infancy—

directed by him, our guardian angel hovered around our cradle — it is his almighty arm which has been stretched out to protect us through all the dangers and trials of youth and manhood, and which has led us hitherto safely and securely through the vast howling wilderness of the world. Have we not reason to be grateful, more than thankful to our Great Deliverer, through all the trials and troubles of this mortal life? And when we contemplate the price paid for our immortal souls — when we seriously reflect upon that vast, astounding love which began in the manger at Bethlehem and ended upon the cross, does not a mere *professing* Christian appear to us a wonder in the universe?

Whoever you may be — young or old — blessed with this world's goods or bereft of them — heed my words, follow my advice, make God your friend, who has done such great things for you — believe in Him — trust in Him — confide in Him. Yes, tell Him every secret of your heart. Don't look upon Him as afar off, an unconcerned

spectator of man's ways and thoughts—believe Him to be, as He ever is, about your bed by night, and your path by day. Make God's presence the reality it is, and you will seldom commit any great sins. Make Heaven also a reality. Look forward to it as your only safe and happy home—as your inheritance. Always be thinking of that house provided for you, not made with hands—eternal in the kingdom of God.

It was now the province of the Catholic priest to soothe the troubled spirit, and pour consolation into the sinking heart of Sir Digby Colville, by the promise of forgiveness, upon a confession of his sins, who, to his great joy, he found, had lately become a convert to his creed. The last religious rites had been administered to the dying man, when an English gentleman, travelling through that part of the country on his return to England, obtained admission to his room. This was Chetwynd, who, hearing of the extraordinary circumstances which had taken place, came to see Sir



Digby in his last hours, and offer any assistance he might require.

His charitable visit revived for a few fleeting moments the flickering lamp, which was now quickly burning out, and appeared to animate him with returning life. Sir Digby expressed his thanks to Chetwynd, intrusting him with some brief directions, and to apprise his nephew of his death, who was the heir to his titles and estates ; and begging that his remains might be conveyed to Ireland. A message also was sent by him to Lord Dunkerton.

“ I dare not ask forgiveness,” he said, “ of my ill-used, neglected wife, who still lives, although reported dead.”

Chetwynd started in surprise.

“ Lives — you say ! ”

“ Yes, Chetwynd, — you must loathe me for my crimes, — but you will soon learn all — more I have not power to tell you ; but I entreat you to see her, and assure her I died in just abhorrence of the cruel treatment she has received at my hands — and — one other — oh ! ask them to forgive, and pray for my guilty soul.”



He could not say more, and sinking back upon his bed fell into a heavy slumber, from which he never more awoke: thus perishing, unwept, unmourned, in a foreign land, and meeting that fate he had prepared for his unoffending and ill-used wife.

## CHAPTER IX.

To account for Chetwynd's appearance, we must relate what became of him after his mad attempt to perish with, rather than live without, the woman he had loved so desperately. From irritability of the brain some excuse may be made for this fearful outrage; it was not premeditated; he never had for a moment contemplated self-destruction, or that greater crime, taking the life of another. Chetwynd possessed a warm heart and generous disposition, but he was like a lucifer match, composed of igneous materials, which upon the first hard rub burst out into a flame. He was irritable and impetuous, sometimes to an alarming degree, giving way at the moment to the impulse of those fierce passions

which lay latent in his breast until evoked by some sudden excitement. By such men as these murder is committed, for few are so utterly depraved, so hardened, as to shed the blood of their fellow men without provocation or insult. In a moment of uncontrolled anger, the fatal blow is dealt which consigns the injured to an untimely grave, and the injurer to a living death. It is under the influence of unbridled lust or passion that those fearful crimes are committed which bring quick repentance, and long, never-ending remorse. There is, no doubt, a passing gratification in such indulgences. It is like the outpouring of pent up waters. The dam is burst, the stream rushes forth in its first irresistible force, carrying all before it, but soon does the swelling, foaming torrent subside into its usual quiet, sullen channel.

Chetwynd, under the promptings of wild, ungovernable passion, tinctured with a little resentment, would, in that moment of frenzied excitement, have consigned himself and Edith Maxwell to a watery grave ;

for, however we may attempt to disguise the fact, there is in man's nature, even of the best kind, a deal of passion mixed up with his love for woman. We may talk of pure disinterested affection, and this no doubt is felt by many, of chaste minds, in the first dawning of their youthful love-dreams ; but this becomes gradually alloyed with more earthy dross and selfish desires.

Chetwynd was not one of refined ideas on this subject. He was passionately in love with Edith, and her dazzling beauty had now entirely engrossed his whole thoughts and feelings. He had given way to them without the least restraint or reservation. There was no rival in his path to cause him fear or doubt, and he had her father's full sanction to his suit. The first rejection of his proposal he attributed solely to maiden coyness ; but, since her illness, she had received him with those soft beaming looks which he had mistaken for love. There is a sympathetic feeling in woman for the man who loves her in vain, because she loves another,—a compas-

sionate expression in her pitying eye, which is too often attributed to a very different cause; and thus Chetwynd, relying upon these outward signs, had deluded himself into the conviction that Edith reciprocated his own feelings. He also entertained the idea, very prevalent with those who have seen the world, that by patience and persevering attentions the love of any woman may be obtained, provided the suitor is tolerably good-looking and agreeable. Some go a point beyond this, by asserting that even the plainest man may win the heart of the most beautiful and accomplished of the softer sex, if he will take the time and trouble requisite for this purpose. Every day facts appear to confirm this opinion; and as a general rule it must be admitted that we see much more often handsome women married to plain, even ill-looking men, without the semblance of one external interesting feature to recommend them, than handsome men with plain wives.

Chetwynd, when assured of the Colonel's entire approval of his addresses to his

daughter, felt fully satisfied as to the ultimate attainment of his object; and, blinded by infatuation, construed all Edith's blushes and little exhibitions of uneasiness and restraint in his presence as certain proofs of her growing preference. In such a nature as his, however, passion had now obtained so complete an ascendancy, that he could submit to no further delay, and supported by her father, he never anticipated any serious opposition to his proposal. There might be a little tiresome timidity or bashful reluctance on her part to confess her true feelings; but he never expected anything approaching to resolution or decision from such a gentle, loving, and affectionate girl as Edith Maxwell. The event was already settled in his own mind, that she must become his wife, if now pressed by her father's recommendation, and his own passionate pleadings. He never had given Edith credit for the firmness she exhibited — never thought her capable (if uninfluenced by any deep regard for himself) of disputing her parent's



wishes ; but the meeting in the grotto had at once opened his eyes to her true character, when, giving way to mixed feelings of passion and resentment, he attempted the rash act from which he had been saved by Edmund Knightley ; and maddened by his interposition, the fiercest passions of his tigrine disposition, increased by the struggle between them, would have hurried himself and his opponent into eternal destruction.

Defeated in his purpose, the fiend of hatred and revenge still held dominion over him, as he walked hurriedly away, until, feeling faint from this sudden exertion, he leaned against a tree for support, his limbs trembling with agitation, and his heart throbbing with violent pulsations. Reaction followed. His pulse ceased its throbings, and remorse quickly succeeded, when he began to reflect upon the monstrous crime he had so nearly committed, and the gross outrage he had offered to the daughter of Colonel Maxwell, by whom he had ever been treated in the most friendly manner.

His mind was filled with horror, when contemplating the fearful tragedy in which he had so nearly involved the woman he loved with all the intensity of his passionate nature. We have seen the result of these reflections in the letter he addressed that night to Colonel Maxwell; and the day following Chetwynd left Dropmore.

We need not accompany him in his wanderings by many strange waters, for a period of four years; at the end of which, having heard of Edith's marriage with Edmund Knightley, thoughts of home again took possession of his mind, and in returning he passed through Florence, where he met with his old school-fellow, John Egerton, whom he had not seen for many years. An invitation followed to his house, where Chetwynd was introduced to his sister Lucy—their father having died a few months previously.

There was nothing particularly attractive in the features of Lucy. She was neither handsome nor pretty—neither could she be called plain. She had brilliant eyes, and a

fine intellectual forehead—full pouting lips, between which, when she smiled, was displayed a beautiful set of pearly teeth ; but the whole contour of her face, although not irregular, possessed no definite character except when, animated by conversation, her eyes became lit up with great brilliancy, betraying all the emotions of her soul. Lucy was of a very affectionate and amiable disposition, but she possessed at the same time great firmness of mind ; and some might have called her rather masculine in manners and ideas ; there was, however, nothing bold, or positive, or pedantic in her conversation, although well read in general literature, as well as the classics, in which she had been assisted by her brother, himself a good scholar. She was also mistress of the French, Italian, and German languages, exceedingly fond of music, and inheriting superior talents in this respect, both vocal and instrumental, nowise inferior to the first public performers of the day. Chetwynd was not only passionately but even painfully fond of music also. He

was excited almost to frenzy by its soul-stirring strains, and lulled like an infant by its soothing melody.

The two old schoolfellows soon became great friends, although there existed not one point of resemblance between them either in form, disposition, or mind; and John Egerton, although his junior by some few years, looked older than Chetwynd; cares and troubles had left their mark upon the brow of the former, who was serious and thoughtful, whilst the latter, save at times, when memory brought back the scene of his last parting with Edith Maxwell, seemed as light of heart as in his schoolboy days. They were, however, drawn together by early associations, and that tie which on foreign soil attracts Englishmen to each other, partnership in the place of their nativity. They talked of the olden time, when they first met in the hunting field upon their ponies, with old Squire Knightley's hounds—of their first hunt ball, and the partners they danced with—of friends old and young, through

whom they felt connected by the interest each felt in these mutual relationships.

Thus a month passed rapidly away, a day seldom elapsing without Chetwynd seeing Egerton, for whom he now felt an increasing regard the more he became acquainted with his sterling good qualities. Lucy also had cast a spell of fascination over him by her musical talents and sprightly though sensible conversation, and Chetwynd had never felt himself so much at home as in the society of this brother and sister, who appeared all in all to each other. Both had heard of Chetwynd's mad attempt to drown himself with Edith Maxwell, which produced of course an unfavourable impression of him in Lucy's mind; and although ever ready to receive and entertain him to the best of her ability as her brother's friend, Chetwynd saw clearly that he had made little progress in her good opinion. She welcomed him with a smile, as a common acquaintance, but there was no cordiality in her manner, and at times he detected her inquiring

glances towards him, when conversing with her brother upon any exciting subject.

They were alone one morning, when Chetwynd said in his abrupt way, "You do not like me, Miss Egerton, and as you are candour itself, pray tell me the cause why you cannot regard me, like your brother, as a friend?"

"You look so exceedingly fierce sometimes," Lucy replied with a laugh, "that I am afraid of you; and I have heard you express opinions so entirely at variance with my own, upon a most important subject, that we can have no community of ideas, thoughts, or feeling, without which true and steadfast friendship cannot exist."

"Upon what subject, may I ask, Miss Egerton?"

"Religion," Lucy said, very gravely. "I fear you are a Deist."

"I may answer you in the words of Pope:—

"For modes of faith let senseless zealots fight,  
*His* can't be wrong whose heart is in the right."

"I believe you possess a good heart and



most kind disposition, Mr. Chetwynd,—a heathen may possess the same—excuse me for the observation,—but that is not enough to satisfy me. What is your idea of Christianity? You have asked me to speak candidly, I do so at your request.”

“I have never bestowed much time upon the study of either the Old or New Testament, for since my school days it has been chiefly occupied in travel.”

“But you have seen your favourite poet’s prayer realised in every nation you have visited—

“ Father of all, in every age,  
In every clime, adored,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord !”

“Yes, Miss Egerton, I have witnessed every kind of idolatry and superstition, from the banks of the Ganges to the wilds of America, but of all creeds the Turkish or Mohammedan struck me as the most comfortable.”

“And under that conviction, Mr. Chetwynd, I suppose you intended Edith Max-

well to accompany you into the Mohammedan paradise."

Chetwynd smarted under the lash of this sharp reproof; but after a short silence said, "You are very severe upon me, Miss Egerton."

"The surgeon is obliged to use sharp remedies to save a patient's life; these are merciful in the end, when they effect his cure; but I have no desire to carry on this conversation further, Mr. Chetwynd, since, if I speak at all upon this subject, I must express what I feel firmly and candidly."

"Pray proceed, Miss Egerton—I am your willing subject—spare not the knife."

"Well, then, you could not be a Christian to attempt the destruction of yourself as well as another."

"No, Miss Egerton, I must admit I am not a Christian. I cannot comprehend the mysteries of the Christian faith. I cannot understand how Christ could be God and man."

"Can you comprehend, Mr. Chetwynd,

how body and soul can be one man? It is past your comprehension and mine how these two, the spiritual and carnal nature, are combined in one frame; yet there can be no doubt of the fact. Will you believe nothing you cannot see and understand? You behold a tree grown, but cannot discern any movement as it grows; you feel the wind blow, yet cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. You know and perceive the wonderful works of the creation, and must confess that by infinite wisdom and power God has made them all. Have you no wish, Mr. Chetwynd, no laudable ambition, no worthy thirst after nobler knowledge than that which concerns this lower world? Would you be satisfied, like thousands and millions of grovelling mankind, to live and die as the beasts of the field, enslaved by degrading passions and irrational pursuits? Have you a soul, Mr. Chetwynd, so debased and earthly as this? Are your ideas so circumscribed, your mind so obtuse, your intellect so narrow, that you can think of no other

world than this? Have you no desire to look into futurity, no longing after a more exalted and happy state, no wish to enter into those blissful regions inhabited by God and His holy angels? Oh! Mr. Chetwynd, do you possess so poor and spiritless a nature, which a dark-minded Indian would blush to confess? How, with such ideas and feelings as you possess, could we be friends? Yours confined to earth, my thoughts soaring to the world above the skies, where I expect to meet those I esteem here, to live together in boundless eternity, as boundless as our love. Surely you must feel upon reflection that you have a far nobler birthright—a higher aim than the attainment of those earthly bubbles, which so quickly burst into liquid air?”

Lucy ceased speaking, and Chetwynd sat motionless, his whole attention absorbed in the contemplation of the soul-lit features of her whom he had hitherto regarded with comparative indifference. There was an earnestness in her manner, and a transcendent animation in her sparkling eyes,

which struck him with admiration, even with awe; and the thought crossed him, "She has a soul and mind above the generality of her sex."

"Thank you, Miss Egerton," he at last said, "for your candour. I hope we may yet be friends, joined in such friendship as you have described. Will you be my guide in search of these sacred truths, hitherto withholden from my sight?"

"Not withholden, Mr. Chetwynd; you have not begun to search after them. You have contented yourself with earthly objects, earthly pleasures. The pages of that book which brings life and immortality to light, you have never perused. But if you are really desirous of such knowledge, I will lend you this work, 'Paley's Evidences of Christianity,'"—taking it down from the bookcase,—“which will assist you in obtaining that wisdom which cometh from above.”

Accepting with many thanks the proffered loan of the work, Chetwynd soon after took leave of his now interesting instructress,

and remained the whole of that evening engrossed with his new study.

However good in themselves, edifying and instructive, there is nothing like effective enthusiastic preaching to enforce the truth of the very best sermons; and Chetwynd felt more convinced by Lucy Egerton's persuasive, impassioned eloquence than by the clear expositions of the theologian whose work he was perusing; and he found himself continually sitting at the feet of the female Gamaliel, listening as an obedient little child to her instructions. There was a sublimity in her ideas, a poetical oratory in her words, an animated enthusiasm in her manner and looks, which sent conviction to his mind that every word she spoke came from her heart; and his wild thoughts and feelings were gradually, although to himself imperceptibly, yielding to an influence he could no longer resist.

Within three months from his first introduction to Lucy Egerton, Chetwynd had



become an entirely changed man ; his restless, tigrine disposition ameliorated, if not subdued ; and from keeping a constant watch over his thoughts and feelings, they could no longer break out into fierce rebellion against his now awakened convictions. There had been a sharp conflict in his heart between natural and spiritual impulses, and fortunately in his case the spirit proved stronger than the flesh. Chetwynd had become infected with the enthusiasm of Lucy Egerton in the right cause, into which he now entered with heart and soul ; for with a man of his sanguine temperament of mind, there was no middle course.

The result may be divined. He pleaded before her the necessity of her constant care and supervision, to keep him in the path she had taught him to pursue, even unto the end.

“Dearest Lucy,” he said one day, taking her hand, “you have begun a good work ; oh ! do not leave it half done. I may relapse

into my former evil ways and errors, from which you have reclaimed me. You have saved me from destruction. We may now be friends, and something more than friends, in this world and eternity. Oh! let me hope that you will henceforth deign to be my guardian angel. By your sweet counsel I have become an altered being. The day-spring from on high has shone into my heart. I have now a nobler purpose than that of living for self, and worldly pleasures, and in the words of the beloved disciple, dearest Lucy, I beseech you 'Let us love one another.'"

"I will not deny," Lucy said calmly, "that I feel a deep interest in your future welfare, and I trust, under Providence, I may have been the humble instrument of converting you from the error of your way; yet marriage is a solemn obligation, too solemn to be hastily contracted. I must have time for reflection. I would see that the seed has fallen on good ground. I will not give you my final answer now, but six months hence, should you continue

in the same faith and mind, perhaps," she said, with a deep blush, "I may not be inexorable."

And she kept her word, as Chetwynd preserved his faith and love.

## CHAPTER X.

FROM the death-bed of Sir Digby, we will now turn to her upon whom he had inflicted almost a living death, a sense of shame and dishonour which could cease only with her existence. Two days after the departure of Sir Digby from Pennington Hall, Mrs. Aubrey returned there on a visit to her daughter during her supposed husband's absence in Ireland; and as day after day passed without a line from him, Miss Aubrey began to express her surprise and alarm at his silence.

"It is very strange," she remarked to her mother on the sixth morning, when they were at breakfast, "that there is still no letter from Sir Digby: what can have

become of him? I shall write to-day to know if he has reached his place."

"Perhaps he has had a tedious passage, my dear," Mrs. Aubrey said, scarcely raising her eyes from the "Morning Post," which she was attentively perusing. "Husbands soon forget the time when they were lovers—but, good heavens!" she exclaimed suddenly—"what is this?" as the following paragraph struck her eye under the heading of—

"EXTRAORDINARY DISCLOSURES IN  
"HIGH LIFE."

"We are informed, upon unquestionable authority, that the Lady Agnes Colville, whose death was reported in our columns some fifteen months since, is still actually amongst the living, and that she has now returned to her paternal seat, Woodborough Park. It appears by the statement we have received, from a gentleman of undoubted veracity, and well acquainted with her ladyship and family, that she was left by her husband in a sequestered place in

the south of France, and that, in anticipation of her death by rapid decline, he had, before that event occurred, married another wealthy heiress."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Aubrey, in excessive agitation; "and yet Lady Agnes was the name of Sir Digby Colville's first wife, and her father the Earl of Woodborough. Oh! my child—my poor ill-used, deceived child! can this be true? can you have married such a monster?"

"Oh no! dearest Mamma, it cannot be true—this is some ridiculous story. Sir Digby is honour and truth itself. He is incapable of such base, horrid conduct. I do not believe a word of it."

"Then, my dear, I will write directly to the editor of the paper for his authority in propagating such scandalous news."

Mrs. Aubrey, however, had her misgivings upon the subject, from remarks she had heard in London about Sir Digby since her daughter's marriage, which kept her in a restless state of anxiety until the



answer came from the editor, in these words:—

“MADAM,

“We beg to inform you that the paragraph to which you have called our attention is strictly true, and although we must decline giving our authority, you will find upon inquiry that Lady Agnes Colville is now with her father, the Earl of Woodborough, to whom she returned about a week ago.”

“Alas! my poor dear child,” cried Mrs. Aubrey, bursting into tears on reading this confirmation of her fears; “it must be true; you have been deceived and ruined by that false, heartless man! His first wife still lives! Oh, what a villain to treat us thus!”

Miss Aubrey sat motionless and speechless in her chair, stunned by this overwhelming intelligence. The shock was too great for tears or lamentations. Her mind became utterly bewildered, and with a deep sigh she fell back in her chair. Mrs. Aubrey

attempted in vain to rouse her, and ringing the bell hastily for assistance, her senseless daughter was carried to her room by herself and lady's-maid, and placed on her bed. Miss Aubrey remained in a state of delirium and high fever for several days, her medical attendant anticipating the worst; but at length youth and a strong constitution prevailing, she became restored to a consciousness of the degraded position in which she was now placed. This feeling caused her tears to flow apace, to the great relief of her overburthened heart; and by her mother's soothing words and unremitting attentions, she became gradually restored to a more resigned state of mind.

During her illness a letter had been opened by Mrs. Aubrey from the jeweller, who having heard these strange reports, wrote to inform her that Sir Digby had called and taken away her diamonds.

"Monster of depravity!" exclaimed Mrs. Aubrey indignantly, "of what crimes has not that man been guilty!"

A month had now elapsed since Miss

Aubrey's first attack of illness, when Captain Duncombe, who had been well known to Mrs. Aubrey and her daughter for some years, claiming relationship with their family on his mother's side, arrived unexpectedly at Pennington Hall.

"I come, my dear madam," he said, on shaking hands with Mrs. Aubrey, "to sympathise with you in your affliction, and I am also the bearer of a message from Mr. Chetwynd, who witnessed the last hours of Sir Digby Colville, whose death must give you more cause for rejoicing than mourning."

"Dead! is he really dead then?" asked Mrs. Aubrey in unfeigned astonishment.

"Yes, my dear madam, of that there can be no doubt. Chetwynd saw him die. He was stabbed by his French servant, and left in the old château, to be consumed amongst its ruins, where he had intended his unfortunate first wife should have perished; and being rescued from his dreadful fate by the villagers, he lingered two days in great agony of body and

mind, until released by death from further suffering."

"I cannot feel for him, Captain Duncombe; he has brought my poor child to the brink of the grave by his wicked, base conduct, and ruined her prospects in life for ever."

"We ought not to speak ill of the dead, my dear Mrs. Aubrey, but he was indeed an unmitigated monster of depravity."

"You may truly say so," Mrs. Aubrey replied, "for he has also robbed my daughter of our family diamonds."

"Of which it seems he was in turn robbed again by the Frenchman, from whose hand he received his death blow; but," the Captain added, "these Mr. Chetwynd thinks may possibly be recovered, by sending a description of the jewels and the man, which he has given me, to the French police."

"They were of great value," Mrs. Aubrey said, "and the attempt to recover them shall be made through a friend of mine in Paris; but of Sir Digby's death, or the

jewels, pray do not say a word to my poor child, who is still too weak to bear any fresh cause of agitation."

Captain Duncombe remained with Mrs. Aubrey three days by her desire, during which she broke by slow degrees to her daughter the news of Sir Digby Colville's death, which was received with more composure than she expected—in fact Miss Aubrey had never been seriously in love with him, but as is the case with many women, her self-love had been gratified by his deferential attention to her wishes and plausible adoption of her opinions. She had never experienced for him that deep, devoted affection of the heart by which a first true love is distinguished; and the infamy he had now brought upon her name and family roused her feelings of just indignation for such an audacious insult to her offended honour.

Duncombe had always been a great favourite both with herself and mother, and his cheerful conversation tended in some measure to relieve the gloomy thoughts by

which she had been hitherto oppressed ; and at his departure he was again invited by Mrs. Aubrey to spend a few days more with them before their leaving home for Italy, where it was their intention to winter.



## CHAPTER XI.

AT Woodborough Park we find Lady Agnes restored once more to her father's arms, yet apparently to him and Mrs. Errington in the last stage of decline; and in consequence of their fears, Dr. Bateman, the clever physician of Waterton, who had before attended her, was immediately sent for. After a close examination of his patient the learned doctor returned to the Earl, who was anxiously awaiting his opinion, and with a cheering smile said, "Your apprehensions are groundless, my lord, I am happy to tell you. Your daughter's lungs are as sound as my own; she is suffering from nervous affections and great debility; her pains in chest and side, although so acute, are merely nervous; it

is all upon the nerves, my lord, nothing more."

"Are you quite certain, doctor?" asked the Earl, "may you not have mistaken her case?"

"No, my lord, upon that point there can be no doubt, and I may assure you that in a few weeks your daughter will be restored to health. She requires tonics, good living, and cheerful society; but avoid all excitement. She must be kept in the dark as to certain events which have happened for the present, and all will be well."

"Thank God!" ejaculated the Earl, "for this unexpected mercy, for I feared my poor child had only come home to die."

"To live, my dear lord, I hope," was the cheerful reply, "to be a comfort to you in your declining years. So now, to begin the cure I have in hand, I will do myself the honour of dining with your lordship this evening, to see what effect a little cheerful conversation will produce upon Lady Agnes, and an extra glass or two of your excellent old port wine. Tonics,

my dear lord, porter and port wine are the chief medicines she requires."

"I wish you could dine with us every day in the week," the Earl said cheerfully.

"I feel flattered by your compliment, my lord; this is rather a leisure time with me just now—fine, clear, beautiful weather, and few cases on hand—your lordship may have reason to repent your hospitable invitation."

"I shall be the gainer, my dear sir, by your agreeable company and amusing anecdotes; and I really do hope you will dine here as often as you can give us that pleasure."

"The day after to-morrow, then, my lord, you may expect me again, and if our young friend, Edmund Knightley, with his charming wife and children, could be prevailed upon to meet me, and spend a few days at Woodborough, they will help me effectually in my case."

"Yes, yes, Doctor, I understand; they shall be invited directly."

Dr. Bateman was what is called a cha-

racter—that is, an odd character. He was exceedingly clever in his profession, and a man of superior abilities in other respects, and he possessed a large stock of quaint amusing stories, which he told in a manner peculiarly his own. It was surprising to see with what eagerness ladies would gather round him after dinner, when he began some of these quaint relations, with features calm and demure, whilst his hearers were almost convulsed with laughter.

Dr. Bateman was a fine, portly personage, with a strikingly handsome and intellectual countenance, expressive of great good-humour and kindly feelings — exceedingly courteous in manner, and consequently a great favourite with the softer sex, although equally well received by the gentlemen of the county, whose families he attended, his strict secrecy when consulted gaining for him universal esteem and confidence; for he was never known to divulge anything about his patients, or talk about family matters. That evening he endeavoured to rouse Lady Agnes from her

despondency, relating such stories as he thought would enliven and amuse her, and so far succeeded in raising an occasional smile upon her face.

"Come, my dear young lady, you must take a glass of wine with your old doctor."

"I am sure you will excuse me," she replied, "for papa has given me two already."

"Of sherry," he added, "which I do not approve in your case; so now you must take a glass of champagne with me, two of which you are to drink every day at dinner, and a glass of port wine with your dessert."

"You intend to make me tipsy, doctor," she replied more cheerfully.

"Oh! no, my dear—champagne is peculiarly a lady's wine, light and cheering—a bottle would do you no harm, and I am sure you will not abuse your doctor for prescribing such agreeable medicine. I must bring back the roses, my dear young friend; you have been starving and frightening yourself to death nearly, on

account of the pain in your side, which we must drive away by generous living; and mind, my dear Madam," he added, turning to Mrs. Errington, "the porter at night—not a bad composing draught."

Doctor Bateman continued with this lively, cheerful conversation to make his patient feel more at ease with herself, and dispel the fears she entertained that she was fast hurrying to her grave; and his sparkling sallies of wit and good humour produced the desired effect, Lady Agnes being rallied out of her gloomy anticipations.

A fortnight had now passed since Dr. Bateman's first visit to Lady Agnes, who under his treatment, and with Edith now as her constant companion in all her drives and walks, began slowly but perceptibly to improve in health and spirits, although still nervous and anxious about her husband.

"Can you tell me, dear Edith," she asked one day, as they were walking together, "what has become of Sir Digby? Mrs. Errington assures me she does not know, but perhaps Edmund has heard something."



“Why agitate yourself, dearest Agnes, about one who never cared for you, and left you to perish, as he believed and hoped, amongst strangers.”

“Perhaps business detained him longer than he expected, and he might have intended, as he said, returning to bring me home.”

“Pleasure, not business, dear Agnes, kept him in London, and he denied you even the pleasure and comfort of hearing from your friends. For fifteen months not a letter of yours has ever reached Mrs. Errington or myself, — you tell me you wrote several, — and you confess you were kept quite a prisoner in that old château, by the man who had vowed to love, honour, and cherish you as his wife! How can you, my dear Agnes, bestow another thought or care upon such a heartless monster in human shape.”

“He is my husband still,” she said mournfully.

“He has cast you away, Agnes, and cancelled all obligations you owed to him.”

“How so? Dearest Edith, in mercy tell me what more he has done; I know and feel there is something you conceal from me; I can bear it now, indeed I can; anything is better than this dreadful suspense. It wears me all day, and prevents me sleeping at night.”

“I fear I should be doing wrong to say more now, dear Agnes, but, believe me, you ought no longer to disturb yourself about so worthless a character.”

“Tell me all, Edith—I implore, I entreat you, if you really love me; my mind is fully prepared for the worst. You have told me already too much or too little—let us sit down in this garden chair, let me hear all now; it is indeed better so.”

Edith, seeing her excessive agitation, thought it better to comply with her request.

“Well, my dear Agnes, you know how he deserted and left you in the power of his French servants, cutting off all communication with your friends; but you did *not* know the reason he had for treating you

thus cruelly. Believing you to be in a rapid consumption, he represented you as already dead—yes, dearest Agnes, long and deeply were you mourned by us all; and he obtained your money from your trustees, which he spent in paying his debts, and living in his old style of extravagance, and then — oh ! I cannot tell you more.”

“ Yes, yes, you must, dearest Edith,” — grasping her arm, and becoming deadly pale — “ all, everything — you *must* tell me.”

“ Then, my poor Agnes, that heartless man married another deluded victim, like yourself — young and an heiress ! ”

“ Married her ! did you say ? ” gasped Agnes — “ oh no ! no ! this could not be, whilst he knew I still lived ! You have wronged him — he is incapable of such horrible depravity and wickedness as this ! ”

“ He is, believe me, capable of anything, dear Agnes — anything and everything dishonourable and treacherous. Our opinion of him has never changed. We warned you of his true character, although then

ignorant of half his villainy ; but you would not hear a word against him—you would invest him with virtues foreign to his nature ; you loved an ideal character, raised by your own impulsive mind and overwrought imagination. All save yourself foresaw the consequences of your rash marriage—as far as regarded your happiness with such a man, and now, you would screen his vices, and take the part of one who never loved you, but, despising your weakness, has trampled under foot the laws of God and man ! There exists not the slightest doubt, my dear Agnes, of his having married another ; your own death was announced fifteen months since in all the papers, as was his marriage a short time after to Miss Aubrey—that was her name—an only child, and heiress like yourself. She has a fine place in Lancashire, where that man was living with her, when Edmund went to rescue you from your prison walls in France, and he has now, it appears, deserted also this wretched girl, fearing the punishment due to his detestable crimes.”

“Oh! dear Edith, this is indeed dreadful—I could not have believed any one capable of such wickedness, although Edmund had partly prepared me to expect something very bad.” And covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears, sobbing hysterically.

“My dearest Agnes, I fear I have done very wrong in yielding to your entreaties.”

“Oh no! dear Edith, the blow must have fallen; but it is hard to bear. It has crushed every latent hope of happiness in this world; for I loved him once, Edith—loved him passionately, and we cannot forget our first love. It is a vision of the past, which will still recur again and again, and hold its place in our memories and affections, which time is powerless to efface. Do you not feel this in your love for Edmund?”

“It is indeed too true, dearest; but had Edmund thus treated me, I could forgive and pray for him, although I could never see or live with him again.”

Lady Agnes, feeling it impossible to ex-

tenuate or defend the conduct of her husband, relapsed into silence; and although mourning in secret his many crimes and ill-treatment of herself, she became, after the first bitterness of her grief had passed away, more calm and resigned to her unhappy fate. Lady Agnes had loved him with all the strength of her first young ardent affections, and what woman ever forgets the husband of her youth, although stained with the darkest crimes, or guilty of the most base conduct towards herself? In the retirement of her room she offered up prayers that he might be led to repentance and a new course of life; but, alas! for him those prayers had become now unavailing; he had gone to appear before a higher tribunal; and when the intelligence of his death was cautiously made known to his sorrowing wife, a few weeks later, by Mrs. Errington, she bowed her head in meek submission to the decree of Heaven, exclaiming with unfeigned humility, "God's will be done."



## CHAPTER XII.

Soon after Chetwynd's return with his bride to the home of his forefathers, John Egerton arrived in London from the continent, *en route* to the same place, and having a leisure day there, he was sauntering through Lincoln's Inn Fields, when a gentleman accosted him, of whom he had some indistinct recollection, although he could not call his name to remembrance.

"I think, sir," he said, "I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. John Egerton?"

"My name is Egerton," was the reply, "may I beg the favour of knowing yours?"

"Misterton, my dear sir, the son of your old family solicitor."

“ Ah ! your features struck me as not unfamiliar, but some few years have passed since we last met, when you were quite a youth ; but I hope your father is well ? ”

“ I am grieved to tell you, Mr. Egerton, that he has been dead more than twelve months, and when looking over his numerous deeds and papers, one has turned up, relative to your father’s affairs, which is of great consequence, and how it became detached from the other papers connected with this property, I am at a loss to conceive ; but it is most probable that, when looking over these documents, my father was called away upon pressing business, and the other deeds being tied up, this was left out for more careful perusal, and by a mistake of his clerk, I conclude, placed among deeds belonging to another property. We held the mortgage upon Hardington, as I believe you are aware for many years, but upon further advances being required, we were unwilling to exceed the sum already borrowed, and consequently all the deeds,

save this lost one, were handed over to the solicitors for the new mortgagees, Messrs. Barker and Grinder, of Bedford Row, whose harsh dealings with your father you of course know, and their hasty sale of his property to Mr. Shuttleworth, for a sum considerably below its real value—the costs claimed by these sharp practitioners being quite enormous. Your poor father, however, being threatened with arrest also by these people, was obliged to fly the country, and his estates being seized, were completely sacrificed by Barker and Grinder, to cover their mortgages and costs; in fact, it appears they were aware that some deed was missing to complete the title, and accepted the first offer made by Mr. Shuttleworth, who was too eager to close so good a bargain, although himself a retired solicitor, and not ignorant of the hitch in the title.

“No doubt, my dear sir,” continued Mr. Misterton, “he reckoned on your father’s reduced circumstances, thinking it impossible for him to find the means to dispute

the sale, even should the missing deed come to light."

"Then what course do you advise me to adopt, Mr. Misterton?"

"With your permission, I will first take the best counsel's opinion, although I have no doubt whatever myself upon the subject; and if that is in your favour, and you can raise sufficient money amongst your friends to pay the law expenses, we will proceed at once against Mr. Shuttleworth by ejectment — no tedious Chancery suit, my dear sir, which would not suit our finances—but try it at the next Assizes. The impression was that the entail ended with your father, but it is evident, from this deed, that he had only a life-interest in the estate, to which you were entitled after his decease, and if, as I say, *you* can find sufficient funds to try the case, *I* can find the money on mortgage to pay off the sum claimed on his behalf as a life-tenant only, and leave you a handsome income from the property besides."

"Well, Mr. Misterton, I am delighted to

hear such welcome news, and as my sister is now married to Mr. Chetwynd, to whom I am going on a visit for a few weeks, I will first consult him upon the matter, and perhaps he may assist me to recover my rights."

"No doubt of it, my dear sir ; Mr. Chetwynd is a client of ours, and being exceedingly wealthy, a few hundreds would be nothing to him, and if he will send me instructions to proceed we will lose no time in commencing operations, and the opinion of counsel shall be forwarded to you at Dropmore without delay."

We need scarcely say with what a light heart and joyful anticipations John Egerton left London after his interview with Mr. Misterton ; and it will be readily understood how Chetwynd, with his generous feelings, offered at once to assist his brother-in-law with any sum he might require to re-instate him in his property. Mr. Misterton's views being confirmed by counsel, proceedings were commenced forthwith against the illegal possessor of Har-

dington, Misterton coming down himself to serve him and the tenants with the proper notices on such occasion.

The dismay of the Shuttleworths was surpassed only by the joy of Egerton's friends, and the neighbouring gentry, to whom this money-made man had rendered himself most obnoxious and disagreeable. Mr. Shuttleworth, however, lost no time in retaining two of the leading counsel to defend his cause, although from his opponent's strict silence, he remained to the day of trial ignorant of the point upon which he was to be assailed, Barker and Grinder, the solicitors for the mortgagees, being the only witnesses on his side, to prove the transfer of the property into his possession.

The court was densely crowded — the cause exciting great interest in the county — when John Egerton's counsel, without any forensic display, quietly stated his client's case:—That the Hardington estate had been strictly entailed by the grandfather of the present John Egerton, but



that his father had been persuaded he could cut off this entail by suffering a recovery ; but supposing this had been done, as asserted by the opposite party, still he was prepared to prove that deed of no avail.

“ Perhaps,” he said, “ my learned friend on the other side, to save the time of the court, will not object to state whether they attach any importance to that deed said to have been executed by the plaintiff’s father ? ”

Shuttleworth’s counsel, fearing to compromise his client’s case, demurring to this question, the other continued :—

“ My learned friend, of course, is aware that he has no such document to produce, although reference has been made to it in other papers connected with the mortgage ; but although he is unwilling to oblige me in this matter, I will produce this deed, which has never been properly executed, and I have also certificates of the baptism of my client six months prior to this date, and his nurse, with two other witnesses, in court to substantiate this fact ; so that,

another heir having been born to the estate, all the proceedings connected with the sale of the Hardington property have been illegal."

The deed and certificate being handed to the judge, he perused them attentively, and then asked Shuttleworth's counsel what course they intended to pursue. A brief consultation was held between them, after which the leader said that if the plaintiff would agree to repay Mr. Shuttleworth the purchase money and costs of the new house he had erected upon the property, he would advise the defendant to proceed no further in the case.

Egerton's counsel replied that his client was willing to do anything that might fairly be required of him ; that he would pay the mortgage money raised upon the property by his father, but not one shilling of those costs claimed by Messrs. Barker and Grinder, for illegal acts against him and his property ; and, as to the house built by Mr. Shuttleworth, his client had felt too greatly annoyed and grieved by the demolition of the old mansion, with which old

associations were connected, to think of paying a farthing for this fantastical erection.

Another consultation was held, for a few minutes, between his leading counsel and Mr. Shuttleworth, which was terminated by the former, who, addressing the judge, said, they must consent to a verdict for the plaintiff.

This announcement was received by a cheer throughout the court, which sent the defeated cotton spinner, or, as he was now styled "The Railway King," reeling out of it; when, another case being called, the large concourse of people began quietly to disperse, many of whom accompanied John Egerton and his friends to their hotel, loudly cheering and hurraing through the streets.

This was the first check to the ambitious views of this hitherto successful parvenu or money-made man, against whom the tide of fortune had now turned. The news of his defeat reaching London, some depositors became a little nervous about the banking

business, and applied for their money ; others soon followed their example, and a general run immediately commenced, which on the third day cleared the coffers of Shuttleworth and Co. of every sovereign they contained. In fact this great speculator had been dealing so extensively in railway projects and other schemes, that his capital was nearly all afloat on paper and scrip, which it was impossible upon such an unexpected crisis to convert into gold ; and a smash was the inevitable result, which ended in his being declared a bankrupt.

Had he been content with railway transactions, he might probably have realised a very large fortune, but the banking concern caused his ruin, by affording so many more opportunities for trafficking in other people's money, as well as his own. By offering six per cent. upon deposits, he drew immensely upon the public credulity, and of course used the money showered in upon him for the last three years in every project likely to pay. His purchases of land had been also very extensive. Some

of his schemes had failed, some paid him well ; and others again required time for their development, whether they would pay or not. But his creditors would not wait. The affairs of the bank must be wound up, in which about a million of money was involved.

Fortunately for our friend Jack, Grimston Hall had been properly secured to himself and his children, where he was now content to live in a very *humdrum* way, as the Captain termed it, the greater portion of his time being occupied in drinking beer and smoking cigars, until he became as round as one of his favourite casks.

John Egerton had now become reinstated in his ancient patrimonial estates, and the mystery was soon after explained why Emmeline Knightley had refused so many overtures of marriage, and her constant attachment to the once poor, but now wealthy proprietor of Hardington, received its well-merited reward.

“ We must call upon the Chetwynds, I

suppose?" Edmund said to his wife one evening when they were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* after dinner.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"The first meeting with him, I fear, will be very disagreeable to you, my dear girl."

"Oh! no, Edmund — not disagreeable, although perhaps rather awkward; but I hear he has become quite a new creature since his marriage with Lucy."

"Ah! she is just the person to suit *him* — not *me*, dearest, as you were once led to believe. She was not the sort of person I should ever have fallen in love with — no — not even supposing I had never met Edith Maxwell."

"And why not, Edmund? She is very amiable and affectionate, I think I may add good-looking, highly talented, and nearly as well acquainted with the classics as yourself."

"Just so, my love; but the last qualification is by no means a recommendation to men. Defend me from a classical scholar in petticoats, or a masculine woman! The



idea of a blue stocking seems to dispossess your sex of half their feminancy, those softer, gentler qualities we so much admire. You have just sufficient spirit and courage, my love, to make a heroine — *videlicet*, your last parting scene with Chetwynd."

A cold shudder passed through Edith's frame at these words, which Edmund observing, he rose from his chair, and, placing his hand upon her shoulder, said almost in a whisper:—

"Forgive me, my own precious one! I know a recurrence to that scene must call up painful thoughts."

"And grateful ones too, my beloved Edmund; for where had I been now, had not the Father of all mercies sent you to my rescue?"

"And I? my greatest, dearest of all earthly treasures! I thank my God daily, hourly—nay, every moment my eyes rest upon those sweet, lovely features, that so undeserved a blessing has been bestowed upon me, for which I can never feel sufficiently grateful. Yes, dear Edith," he

continued, lowering himself upon his knees, with his head resting in her lap, "I sometimes think my happiness too great to last — too much for any mortal. Since that day you confessed your love, all with us has been one unclouded sky — unbroken sunshine ; no sorrow has for a moment darkened our ever bright days of happiness, no unkind look or reproachful word has passed between us ; and I think I may say truly, we have one heart and one soul only, so entirely are our thoughts, ideas, and feelings blended together."

"Yes, my own dearest husband, it is indeed as you say, and the source of my greatest happiness is that your Edith has made you so happy."

"Ah ! my dear child, you are too good, too beautiful for me, and a coronet would have been graced by that fair brow, save for my meddling interference."

"Never, Edmund," she said firmly ; "I have never loved but one, and that one is Edmund Knightley."

"And a most lucky fellow has been that

same Edmund, my precious girl, to have obtained this coveted possession."

"How fortunate for me you are satisfied. But now," she said with a laugh, "you must rise, my true knight, from your suppliant posture, or Thomas may think you have been behaving very ill, and fallen on your knees to ask forgiveness, if he sees you at my feet when he brings in coffee."

It has been said that "marriages are made in heaven." Some are, undoubtedly, —very few—perhaps one in a thousand; the other nine hundred and ninety-nine being mere worldly compacts—matter of business bargains; passion on one side, expediency on the other—perhaps deception on both. How little unity is there of heart and spirit in those thus united! How slight and frail the bond by which two such persons are held together in this unblest, unholy contract! But oh! what a withered heart is hers who has married the man she loves, and when thus united finds he has no love to give her in return for her devotion! Ah! that is

the canker-worm which eats away the bloom from many a young confiding wife's cheek — hopeless, helpless, unrequited affection. Such has been the lot of thousands — such was the lot of Lady Agnes. Love on one side only. Such fatal mistakes are of every day occurrence. Why is it so? it may be asked in return. How can girls, or women even, better versed in the mysteries of human nature, ascertain the true feelings of any man's heart? How can they discern between professions and realities? By careful, unprejudiced observation. They must not fall in love with a man first, and then expect to see his imperfections, when a veil has been drawn before their eyes by their own hands, through which they have little inclination to penetrate. This is the old story, of trying to believe what you wish to believe. Women are naturally more clear-sighted in these affairs than men, if they will only follow the bias of their own sound judgment, without suffering themselves to be led astray by vanity and foolish fancies.

Men's dispositions are often betrayed by the merest trifles. A look, a word, a gesture, if narrowly watched, reveals their true feelings. Their opinions also upon important subjects may be easily ascertained. Hasty marriages generally turn out badly; and they ought to do so, if they do not. Women have no right to complain of bad tempers and bad treatment, if they despise the most common rules of prudence in the choice of their husbands.

## CHAPTER XIII.

WE are now in the middle of October. The equinoctial gales have been strewing the earth with the bronzed foliage of the trees, now nearly stripped of their faded honours; and many a stately elm in Wychwood Park has bowed its head before the hurtling fury of the blast. The six years that have elapsed have now completely silvered the head of the worthy master of the hounds, although in health and spirits he has suffered little by the lapse of time. He is sitting after dinner in his old arm-chair, his only unmarried child, Reginald, occupying a *vis-à-vis* position. Since the marriage of Edmund, and his daughter Emmeline with John Egerton, father and son appear to have



been drawn rather more closely together, for there existed no longer any cause of jealousy between the brothers, when Edmund had his separate establishment.

"Well, Reginald, what sport to-day?" asked the old squire.

"Very little, Sir."

"No scent, I suppose, with these blustering winds?"

"Rude Boreas did not interfere with us in that respect, Sir. We had a capital scent."

"What did, then, Reginald?"

"The old story; Will cannot ride up to his hounds."

"Poor fellow! he suffers dreadfully sometimes from those fractured ribs, some six years ago; one was not properly set, and at times he can scarcely sit in his saddle over a fence."

"He cannot go on, Sir, through the season."

"What's to be done, then, Reginald? Charley will never make a huntsman."

"I am quite of your opinion now. Once

he gave promise of better things; but he made a sad hash of it to-day when Will was not up, and lost our fox for us in a trice by one of his foolhardy casts."

"Why did not Edmund take the hounds in hand, then?"

"Simply, Sir, I conclude, because he declines to interfere with Lane's prerogative and our *ménage*. He has always been a great stickler for orderly conduct in the field, and as when huntsman he would admit of no one meddling with him, he in turn will not meddle with Will Lane; in short, Edmund seems now to take very little interest in our proceedings."

"Because he thinks rather, Reginald, he might be considered inclined to usurp your place."

"Scarcely from that motive, Sir, since he knows I never pretend to handle hounds."

"Well, what is to be done? as you are the only person to be considered, now Edmund takes so little interest in the pack."

"Let him have more, then, Sir."

"How so?"

“I have no ambition to be a master of foxhounds, having no fancy for kennel work, neither is the odour from the boiler, from which even our drawing-room is not free when the wind sets in from the north, particularly agreeable to my olfactory organs. Some out-and-out fox-hunters may delight in such balmy, aromatic breezes, and would persuade you their wives relish them also—*credat Judæus, non ego*. So I vote, rather than give Will a retiring pension for life, and engage another huntsman, which would be paying for two in place of one, that we hand over the whole concern as it stands — men, horses, and hounds—to my sapient brother Edmund, and let him clear off the lot, boilers, kennels, &c., to St. Austin’s, as soon as he pleases. That is my advice, Sir, in these depressed times. Edmund can do things cheaper than we can—hunt the hounds again himself, and keep on old Will as his kennel huntsman—and he has more money to spend than we have.”

“Well, Reginald, not a bad suggestion,

if Edmund is so inclined. But he is a married man now, and has a wife to consult. Edith may object to his keeping hounds, although not to his hunting with them."

"Edith object, Sir, to anything Edmund wished to do! Why the very idea is, begging your pardon, almost too ridiculous. Whatever Edmund does or thinks, is in her opinion right, and I am not quite sure, if he proposed keeping half a dozen other wives, like the patriarchs of old, that she would say nay."

"There, Reginald, you are mistaken in Edith's character; she will not tolerate any thing or any one coming between her and her husband's love. That is the point of objection I had more particularly in view; she might fancy Edmund's affection for her would be divided with his hounds, for he is very fond of animals."

"So is she, Sir; and I'll bet a trifle she will soon make pets of every handsome hound in the pack."

"Well, Reginald, as they both dine with

us to-morrow, we will talk the matter over; but if he consents, I must make him a present of the pack, and the servant's horses also."

"*Volontiers, mon père* — I quite agree in that proposition, and so the hounds will still be in the family."

"More wine, Reginald?"

"No, Sir, thank you; let us join the ladies."

Reginald was in high spirits that evening, from the contemplated addition to his income when the hounds should be transferred to his brother, and he was glad to see his father entering so quietly and unsuspectingly into his scheme. Reginald's views as to marriage had undergone no change since his first introduction to our readers, but were rather more confirmed than heretofore. He was becoming a decided bachelor in ideas and habits, but he wanted more money to spend in London, to which he resorted every season for amusement and gaiety. Reginald loved his liberty and himself. As a single man

he was petted by the old ladies, and well received by the young. He was the sole heir to large landed property, although somewhat encumbered, and might have married well if so inclined. But, to do Reginald justice, he possessed too much pride to make marriage a moneyed investment. He would not have sold himself to a Semiramis for the wealth of Babylon, had he not felt a preference for her above other women. He had never yet been truly in love with any of the fairer sex. The sentiment was inconsistent with his nature. One he had loved to a certain extent, and one only, and she was now his brother's wife. But even for Edith's sake he could not bring himself to tolerate the idea of marriage, when in connection with the other drawbacks of limited income, and the prospect of a family of children. His stock of love was too small to submit to such sacrifices of comforts; for Reginald disliked squalling brats, and entertained a great dread of the *res angusta domi*.

Notwithstanding, however, his aversion



to children generally, his little niece Edith had worked her way into a corner of her uncle's heart. His former love for her mother, such as it was, being apparently transferred to her little blue-eyed daughter, now four years old. This beautiful child Reginald loved as much as he could love any human being; and his cold sarcastic nature was melted into tenderness by her innocent prattle and sweet cherub-like features, when sitting on his knee, with her little dimpled fingers twisted about his handsome curly hair, or diving into his waistcoat pockets for hidden treasures. Little Edith had been the means of healing the breach between the brothers, and his once bitter taunts against her father had given way to the softening influence of his child's sweet smile and gentle, loving manner towards her uncle.

Young Edmund was the favourite of the old squire, but there was no approach on the boy's part to share with his sister the caresses of Reginald. Children are quick in perceiving how far they may go,

discovering as if by instinct who are kindly disposed towards them; and the boy Edmund, having seen no inviting look in his uncle's eye, confined himself to his grandfather's society, with which he felt perfectly satisfied.

The following evening a rather large party had been invited to dine at Wychwood, although it might almost be called a family circle, consisting of the aged peer and Lady Agnes, the Chetwynds, Egertons, and Maxwells, with old Squire White, the only one on the list in no way connected with the other guests. Lady Agnes had now laid aside her widow's weeds, and amongst her friends and acquaintances the name of Colville had been entirely dropped, as if by mutual agreement or tacit consent. This name had long been hateful to her father's ears, and no servant of his whole household ever uttered that forbidden name in his presence. The past was to be buried in oblivion — at least no allusion was ever made by the Earl in any way to his daughter's ill-fated marriage.

Lady Agnes had now entirely recovered her health, but not her good looks. Care and suffering had fretted away the bloom of her youthful beauty, although she had scarcely reached her twenty-fifth year. Her features preserved their natural well-defined outline, but there was a mournful expression in those once dark brilliant eyes, betokening the pressure of some heavy load still lying hard upon her heart. People of course began, as they always will do, to hazard opinions about her marrying again, but no such thought had crossed her own mind. Bitter indeed had been her experience of wedded life—bitter, ever bitter the reflection of having bestowed her young warm affections upon one who had never given her a single token of reciprocal love. All had passed away now, as a horrid vision, rather than a hardly tried reality, and at the name of marriage the blood seemed to grow cold at her heart. She had made her first willing cast in the lottery of life, and it had come forth a blank; by that issue she was inclined to

be content, she had no wish to make a second venture. Her thoughts were now devoted to other objects. Her attentions to her aged father were unremitting, in the hope of making some amends for her wilful and unkind behaviour; and her spare time was devoted to alleviate the distress and wants of the poor. Still, however, at her father's request she was prevailed upon to accompany him in his visits to their nearest neighbours and dearest friends, amongst whom the family of the Knightleys stood the first.

Upon this occasion Edmund and Edith reached Wychwood Court early in the afternoon, bringing with them, as usual, their two children, who remained the night whenever they dined there, so that Mr. Knightley and his son had full time to discuss the hunting business before the dinner hour.

"Well, my dear boy," the old squire asked, when he had laid before him Reginald's proposal, "what do you think of it? Your brother, as you perceive, will

never keep on the hounds when he may become owner of this place; and I must confess it would give me pleasure to see my old favourites under your care, provided they will not lead you into greater expenses than you can afford. But I shall of course expect and insist upon allowing you a certain sum to assist in maintaining the establishment during my lifetime; and if necessary no doubt a very fair subscription might be raised amongst our friends and the members of the hunt to bear you quite harmless. The Earl will help you; Chetwynd, who has now become one of us, is very rich, and a liberal fellow also. Welford, Addleby, and others would willingly lend you a helping hand."

"Enough, my dear father; I will gladly take the hounds off your hands, and will not refuse some little assistance from yourself, if you insist upon giving it; but I will ask of others none at all. Having a large farm in hand, I shall not feel much the loss of hay and corn eaten by the horses—in fact, like fattening cattle, they will return

me the only profit I obtain sometimes, in the manure, the extra good quality of which will give me an extra number of sacks or bushels of corn, or double weight nearly in my root crops, so that on that score we shall be nearly even; and I am now keeping a stud of brood mares, whose produce will supply the places of the old worn out hunters. So there again there will be no drawing on my pocket. And as to servants and the hounds, I shall keep no more cats than will kill mice; so, my dear father, I think I can manage to hold on the old pack in the family without in the least incommoding myself or asking for contributions from others."

"You have not yet consulted Edith or the Colonel; perhaps one or both may object to your embarking in the undertaking."

"Not the first, my dear father; her consent will, I know, be instantly accorded; and I rather think the Colonel will feel pleased than otherwise at my promotion to the honourable post of Commander-in-



chief in the field, as his daughter, my own darling Edith, will thereby be raised to greater distinction amongst the ladies of the county."

We need scarcely add that Edith's consent was most readily given to her husband's proposal, since from his prudence in money matters, and his attention to proper economy in the management of his property, as well as establishment, she believed him incapable of undertaking anything he was unable to accomplish, without injuring his income, which far exceeded their expenditure, neither of them having expensive ideas or habits.

"Anything and everything, my own dear Edmund," she replied, "which can afford you pleasure or gratification, will, as you well know, contribute to my own; and to confess the truth, I think a little more horse exercise will be of benefit to your health, for you are beginning to grow rather stout, and I do not wish to see you like my quondam admirer, who may now be fairly called Alphonso the Great."

“Ah! my darling, you are ever trying to find excuses for gratifying my fancies; and now, with a kiss for your kindness, I will just step down to the kennels and pour some balm of Gilead into poor old Will’s heart, for Reginald, it seems, told him this morning of his being superseded in his office, which would very nearly break his heart. Poor fellow! he has his darlings like myself,” and straining Edith to his heart, Edmund walked quickly down to the kennel.

Will Lane was not there, but walking the hounds out in the park, with Jack only, the under whipper-in. The old man was moving slowly along, with his favourites around him, his eyes being cast upon the ground, and his mind engaged in painful reflections, when Edmund’s light tap upon his shoulder roused him from his reverie.

“Ah! Mr. Edmund,” he exclaimed, turning quickly round, “you did frighten me, and that’s true; but I’m a-thinking, sir, my thoughts were all wool-gathering just a while ago.”

"Well, Will, speak the truth; about what were your thoughts so busy?"

"About them, Mr. Edmund," pointing with his whip to two old favourite hounds, "Mr. Reginald said something this morning about their changing masters. I am old, Sir, and handy broke down now with this pain in my side; but it's hard to part, Mr. Edmund, with old friends, although they be but poor dumb critters; they seem to know, poor things, by looking up so sorrowful-like into my face, that we shan't be much longer together," and he turned aside, to brush away with his coat sleeve the falling tears.

"Will Lane," Edmund said impressively, as he witnessed his old friend's deep emotion, "have you ever known me break my promise to any one?"

"Oh, no! Mr. Edmund, never."

"Well, then, this promise I make you; you and your favourites shall never part, so long as life is spared you both. *I* am the new master, *you* are their huntsman still, and ever shall be, as long as you can

toddle about the kennel yard ; does that satisfy you ? ”

“ Oh, dear ! Mr. Edmund, indeed it do ; it’s put life and joy into my old heart.”

“ Give me your hand, Will ; that promise I thus ratify to my father’s old faithful servant, and his son’s respected master in woodcraft ; will that make you happy ? ”

“ Happy, Mr. Edmund ! happier than a king. Then Master Charley ain’t to be handling them, as I feared ? ”

“ Charley will be handling some other hounds before long, Will, unless he completely alters his tactics. I shall put Jack forward in his place, if he takes any more liberties in the field, and that you may tell him ; we can do without him.”

“ And far better, I’m a-thinking, Mr. Edmund, since you can help us again.”

“ Well, Will, now you understand that, as long as you can hunt the hounds, you are to do so ; but don’t worry yourself about riding up to them, or riding at all, when your side gives you pain. I can do that part of the business, and handle them

when you are not at head ; but go out you shall, as long as you can sit in your saddle."

"Well, Mr. Edmund, I shall do as you please, but I'm a-thinking you had better take 'em in hand yourself, and I can stay at home."

"No, Will, that shall not be ; I shall not be pleased with your staying at home, unless you are really too ill to go out. Two heads are better than one, and we shall play old gooseberry with the foxes, you as huntsman, and I as head whipper-in.

"Ah ! Mr. Edmund, you means it kindly, I know, and I shall do as you tell me, but "——

"Another word, Will, and I'll hang up old Solomon before your eyes ; now take the hounds home to the kennel, and as I dine and sleep here to-night, you must come after dinner to drink your new master's health, and hear what your old one has to tell you."

"Ay, Sir, may God bless him and you too, and all belonging to you — dear Miss

Edith — ah ! I'm an old fool, always a-thinking of old times — my dear young mistress, I means, Mr. Edmund."

"She will keep you in order, as well as her husband, Will."

"Ay, ay, God be praised, you've got such an angel as that for your wife ; it does one good to look upon her sweet face."

"Then come up and tell her that yourself to-night ;" with which Edmund turned away, resuming his walk back to the house.

There was a peculiarity in the temperament of Edmund Knightley's mind which unfitted him for worldly life. He would have been considered a fool or idiot amongst worldly men, for he happened to be one of those eccentric beings whose highest pleasure it is to give pleasure and comfort to others. He also possessed a delicacy of touch in rendering such services, which greatly enhanced their value ; and happier far did he feel now, when retracing his steps to his father's house, than even the old faithful servant he had left so happy in



the kennel, patting the heads of his favourites with cheerful looks and words, although the tear still stood in his eye.

“Ah! Jack,” he exclaimed, “God be praised, Mr. Edmund is our new master, and I’m a-thinking you’ll soon be in Charley’s place, for he won’t stand no more of his nonsense. You see Mr. Reginald and the Captain, and some of the fast ones, have set his head all a-gog, by saying he ought to be hunting hounds instead of whipping-in; but Mr. Edmund says he may handle other people’s hounds if he likes, and that pretty soon too; the pack belongs to Mr. Edmund now. Old Master has made him a present of them.”

“You bain’t in earnest, Mr. Lane?”

“Yes, I be, Jack; it’s all settled, and he’s a-going to build new kennels directly at St. Austin’s, and a nice new comfortable house for your old huntsman to end his days in, God bless him! and you’re to have another, Jack, when you chooses to marry Betsy Green.”

“Hurroar! Mr. Lane,” cried Jack, throw-

ing his cap up in the air, which, alighting on old Solomon's back, caused that individual's hackles to rise with a sudden sharp growl and spring of defiance towards his assailant.

"No offence intended, old fellow," Jack said, smoothing down his bristles, "you and I never falls out. Well, Mr. Lane, this is summut to put us both in spirits, and if you don't want me now, I'll just step across to Tom Springfield's to give him the news, and be back again by bedding-up time."

Tom Springfield was sitting smoking his pipe after dinner, with a jug of two-year-old October before him, on a little round table near the fire — his old father snoozing opposite, in his rickety arm-chair — when Jack's voice was heard at the door, asking if he was at home.

"Yes, he is," cried Tom, "come in, Jack ! Anything the matter ?"

"Well, Sir, there is a little matter I thought you'd like to know about."

"Nothing wrong — eh ?"

"No, Sir, just the contrary."

"Then fetch a chair and sit down. Now Jack, wet your whistle first — clear the cobwebs from your throat — that will do it," handing him the jug.

"Thank'ee, Sir," said Jack, taking a draught; "that be something like liquor."

"Well, now for the matter, what is it?"

"Old Master have gi'ed up the hounds."

"What?" cried Tom, springing upon his legs in consternation, "d'ye call that good news?"

"Then this is, Sir; Mr. Edmund has got 'em."

"Quite sure of that, Jack?"

"Sartain, Sir."

"Holloa! Molly!" cried Tom.

"What is it you wants, please?" asked a round, florid-complexioned lass, appearing at the summons.

"Three beakers, and a jug of hot water, Molly. There, Jack, finish off the ale, and you shall have a taste of this," taking down a long-necked bottle from the cupboard.

"What's happened?" asked the old

man, awakened from his nap by his son's loud voice.

“ You shall hear, father. Now Jack, out with it, all you know.”

“ Well, Sir, Master Edmund has just been down to the kennel, and told Mr. Lane that the Old Squire have made over to him the hounds, hosses, and all on us — the whole consarn ; and he begins as Master to-morrow.”

“ So far so good, Jack ; but what's the cause of it ? ”

“ There, you see, Mr. Springfield, Master Reginald has been long a-talking about having a new huntsman, and wanted to put Mr. Lane aside ; but the Old Squire wouldn't have it. So Mr. Reginald says he'd better give up the hounds to Mr. Edmund at once, for he would not keep 'em on, when it comes to his turn to do it. So old Master cuts it short, and hands 'em over directly. There, Sir, that's the long and short of the matter — the job's settled.”

“ And a capital good job too, Jack. The

right man is in the right place now, any-ways. But what about poor old Will?"

"Just this. Mr. Edmund says he shall hunt the hounds as long as he can sit in the saddle, and he'll ride up to 'em when he can 't, and put 'em right, for him; but that he shall never have another huntsman put over his head as long as he lives."

The smack of Tom Springfield's large open palm upon his knee rang through the house at these words. "That's him, father—him all over. Master Edmund has got a heart as big as our four-year-old bullock!"

"Yes, Tom, you knows he were always my favourite, and I wishes —— well, 'tain't no good a-wishing."

"No 'tain't, father; wishing won't alter things, but things may come about as many of us wishes, one of these days; so now, father, we will drink to the health and success of our new master, and may long life and happiness be in store for our old one!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

THAT same evening, when the ladies had left the dining room, Mr. Knightley, turning to Aaron White, said: "My old friend, I have perhaps some unwelcome news to tell you — but it is a fact — that I have resigned the Mastership of the Hounds."

So unexpected and startling a piece of intelligence struck the Old Squire dumb, who looked as he felt, all amazement for a few seconds.

"You are joking, Knightley," he at last said.

"Indeed I am not. Reginald and I agreed last night it was the best thing we could do, under the circumstances. I am getting too old to see much of hounds now



in the field, and Reginald does not feel disposed to carry them on when I am gone ; so we settled the matter by appointing a successor at once."

"Ah!" muttered the old man, setting down his glass upon the table and looking hard into the fire, as if there was something there between the bars of the grate which had entirely absorbed his whole thoughts and attention ; but this monosyllable alone escaped his lips.

"Don't you wish to hear the name of the new Master, White?"

"No, Sir," was the short indignant reply. "I have seen my last day with foxhounds."

"Come, come, my old friend, you and I must go out to see how they are managed."

"No, Knightley ; I've done with it altogether, when you throw up the pack——"

"Unless — you must allow me to finish your sentence — unless you approve our choice of a successor."

"Who is he then, Knightley ? Not that coxcomb, Welford, I hope."

"No, no, nor Addleby, who's mad

enough to undertake anything. No, White, the new Master sits at this table."

"The deuce he does! Perhaps Mr. Chetwynd?" looking hard at that gentleman, with anything but a pleased expression.

"I can relieve you of all anxiety on my account, Mr. White," Chetwynd said with a good-humoured smile; "I am not the fortunate individual selected for this honour."

The old man's gaze then falling on Edmund's face, he said, "What a blockhead I am! You are the man. I read confirmation in your eyes; — it is so, my boy?"

"I believe it is, Sir," he replied, "and I hope you will approve my father's and brother's choice."

"They have done well, Edmund; the old pack is still in the family, and I am satisfied. Pass the bottle, I can now drink a glass of wine in comfort."

"Or a bottle," insinuated John Egerton slyly.

"Yes, Mr. Egerton, it may be a bottle. The first words of my friend Knightley knocked me down at once. I did not know how to take them — my heart seemed sink-

ing within me ; and I think as you say, it will take a few extraglasses to set me right again."

" Well then, White," Mr. Knightley said, " we must of course drink the health of the new Master, and have in Will Lane to join in the bumper."

" Assuredly, Knightley, I second the proposal with all my heart."

The bell being rung — the summons issued — Will Lane soon made his *entrée* a few paces into the room, where he stood, cap in hand. And as he thus stands we will complete the hasty sketch of the man we had before commenced with our pencil — for we rarely use the pen.

Will Lane, as we recorded elsewhere, possessed a very spare frame, well knit together, and what it wanted in robustness was fully compensated for by great muscular power. His height one inch only short of six feet. His features, if not exactly regular, were not deficient in intelligent expression ; and there was a meaning in his full dark eye and closely compressed lips which a physiognomist could not mis-

take. His hair had now assumed a very silvery grey appearance, and save for an occasional twitch about his mouth, expressive of a pang within, he stood almost as erect, and looked as well, as when he was first introduced to my readers, some six or seven years since.

"Come, Will," Mr. Knightley said, "sit down, I have something to tell you."

"I had rather stand, Sir, if you please."

"You had better take that chair, Will."

"If it's all the same to you, Sir, I'd rather remain as I am."

Aaron White rose without uttering a word, and approaching him, took his cap from his hand, and threw it quickly into a corner; then holding his arm, led him to the table, placing a chair next his own, in which he made him sit down. He then put a piece of cake on a plate before him, and filled a glass with wine. This was done in silence; Will Lane looking all the while like a little obedient boy, by the side of the gigantic form of the Father of the Hunt.

"You don't mind," he then said, "eating

off the same plate, and drinking from the same glass, as your favourite, Miss Edith?"

"God bless her, Squire, no. The wine will taste all the sweeter."

"There, gentlemen," Aaron White said, "could any of you have turned a prettier compliment to a lady than that? Who will dispute my friend Will Lane's courtier-like demeanour to the fair sex? Egad, sirs, he sadly mistook his vocation when he preferred the pigskin to the woolsack; he might have been Lord Chancellor, or a Bishop, by this time.—Well, well, Will, it will be very soon all the same to you and me whether we have eaten our dinners with a steel or a silver fork. The only difference between us then will be, which has done his duty best in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call us; and many that are first here may be last in the world to come. An honest and true-hearted man is God's noblest work; and as our Great Master was not above sitting down with a few lowly fishermen, neither should I be. Drink your wine, Will, and munch your

cake, or I'll tell Miss Edith you wouldn't eat off her plate."

"No, no, Squire, don't tell her what's not true. I'm getting on very comfortably; but I'm a-thinking, Sir, I've no business to be sitting down in the company of my Lord and the gentlemen."

"I am a-thinking the contrary, Will. We like your company in the field, and we like it here too, so shut your mouth on that subject. And now your old Master is going to give us the health of the young one."

"My dear Edmund," said Mr. Knightley, "in resigning the Mastership of the Hounds and country into your hands, I feel assured I shall meet with the most cordial approbation of every member of our Hunt, and the gentlemen of the county, generally. In fact, from your partiality to the sport since a boy, and the talents you have exhibited as a huntsman in the field, you are particularly suited to succeed me in the position I have so long held, as Master of the Foxhounds; and I need scarcely add my sincere wishes for your success in this, not



very enviable, undertaking. Our friends here are witnesses that I now make you a present of the pack, servants, and horses, which are yours from this hour; and may you have health, strength, and long life to enjoy your favourite amusement!"

The toast was received with warm congratulations to Edmund from every one present, although with no applauding acclamations, not even from Aaron White; who, although well pleased with his successor, could not suppress a feeling of deep regret at the severance of his old tried friend from the pack which had so many years been established at Wychwood Court.

Edmund Knightley, rightly conjecturing what might be passing through his father's mind, merely said—

"I feel most grateful, my dear Father, for your flattering speech and generous present of the hounds and horses, and hope my friends present will believe I fully appreciate their kind congratulations when drinking my health. I will only say this much more, that if you, or Reginald, should

at any time require back the hounds and horses, they shall be as freely returned as they have been freely given."

"Thank you, my dear boy; but as I never have been much addicted to kennel work, and now care little about hunting, save as the means of meeting my friends in the field, the pack will fare much better with your superintendence."

"That is exactly my case too," Reginald said; "I hate kennel business, and confess to hunting more for the sake of the riding than the hounds. You are just cut out for a Master, Edmund, and I wish you joy of your bargain; for, by Jove! I would as soon be Prime Minister as be at the head of a Fox-hunting establishment. Don't think for a moment that I would deprive you of your darlings. They are all your own, and I never wish the *odora canum vis* to assail my nostrils again, as it has done for the last twenty years, when I first throw up my bedroom window in the morning. The scent from the kitchen is bad enough sometimes; but, by Jove!

horse-leg soup beats ox-tail hollow ! No, no, Edmund, keep them all to yourself, my dear fellow ; your stomach can stand this sort of thing, mine never would."

"It is fortunate for society, Reginald," Aaron White remarked, "that some of us have stronger heads, frames, and stomachs than others, or the world would never go on as it does. You have always been a bit of a dandy since the days when I used to dandle you on my knees, and a little squeamish too about things which other lads did not regard ; but, as we learnt at school, —*sit sua cuique voluntas*—you have your tastes, we have ours, so we shall not fall out about differences of opinion. As you don't fancy keeping hounds, it is fortunate for us Edmund does ; for I at least should regret exceedingly to see them go out of the family."

"I have only one more observation to make," Mr. Knightley said, "upon this subject, which may as well then be dismissed, and that more immediately concerns my old esteemed servant Will Lane. It is my

intention to requite you in some measure for your faithful and laborious services, by a pension of a hundred per annum for your life, with the house and premises you now occupy, and the keep of a horse also, giving you the choice of any you now ride."

"Oh, my dear, good master!" Will Lane said, in a husky, choking voice, "I don't want that, Sir, indeed I don't; for I've saved up a little money to make me comfortable in my old age, if life is spared me."

"You have never disputed my will yet, Lane, and you must not now. I am resolved on making you this allowance—it is little enough—but that you shall have, so not another word, for that point is settled and done with; and although I would not permit you to enter the service of any other, the exception of course is made in favour of my son Edmund, who will most likely be too glad to have you to assist him still; for, except when suffering from pain in your side, you can handle your hounds in the field as well as ever."

“ Yes, yes, my dear Father, Will and I have already settled that part of the business.”

“ Oh! my dear master,” cried Will, “you have been too kind to me. I can’t thank you as I would. I don’t deserve all this.”

“ Yes, you do, you blubbering old fool,” said Aaron White; “no more of that now, Will, the thing’s done and settled, so drink your wine. How does old Solomon’s son go on in his work?”

“ He’s just like his sire; and I’m a-thinking, Squire, he will make just as good a hound.”

“ That’s all right, Will; those Solomons generally turn out well.”

“ The best in the kennel, Squire; nothing can beat them.”

“ Well, gentlemen,” Chetwynd said, “these matters having been adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, I hope you will not consider me out of order in making a proposition, which, as a member of the Hunt, I am partly justified in doing. We must all feel grateful to my friend,

Edmund, for undertaking the responsibilities and trouble of this arduous office ; but I do not think he ought to bear all the expenses too, and as I must say that I am most desirous to share this burden with him, I trust he will do me the favour — for I shall consider it a favour — to accept an annual draft from me, on the First of November, for five hundred pounds.”

“ Bravo ! Chetwynd,” exclaimed Aaron White ; “ you are not the kind of man to do things by halves — that is a noble, generous offer ; and, although the rest of us cannot follow you in such large figures, there are, I believe, amongst us those most willing to lend our young friend a helping hand — with heart and purse also.”

“ I thank you most heartily, Chetwynd,” Edmund said, “ for the kindly feelings towards me which prompted that proposal, but you will perceive my motives for declining it, lest by refusing similar offers from other friends I might be accused of undue partiality or caprice ; and at present it is my father’s wish and my own, that ours



should not be called a subscription pack. Should, however, the expenses prove more onerous than I expect, I will then, with pleasure, avail myself of the kind assistance of my friends."

"Well, gentlemen," exclaimed Reginald, "as I think we have done quite enough kennel work for one night, my proposal is to join the ladies."

"Ah! Edith," he asked upon entering the drawing-room, "where is my little pet?"

"Where all little children ought to be at ten o'clock, Reginald; in bed."

"Is it so late, then?"

"Yes, that hour has just struck."

"Ah! that's always the case, Edith, when we get upon that interminable topic, foxhunting. Old Aaron would have held on till midnight; and whom do you think we have had, as an addition to our party, after you deserted us?"

"I think I can guess: Will Lane."

"Just the person, Edith; and I have my suspicions that Aaron intended to introduce him into the drawing-room also."

"You know, Reginald, he is a great favourite with me and Emmy; quite a lady's man," she added, with a smile.

"You will have plenty of his society soon, then, my fair sister, when Edmund takes the hounds to St. Austin's, and I rather suspect a little too much of it. But as you are such an obedient, passive wife, I conclude you will put up with that and other greater nuisances."

"Willing and cheerful acquiescence can scarcely be called obedience, and I shall be as glad as Edmund to have the hounds at St. Austin's — they are such noble looking, handsome animals."

"Oh! of course; but if Edmund fancied some lions and tigers, they would also become pets of yours; you are too passive by half, Edith — always giving in to your husband's fancies. I once thought you a girl of spirit."

"Then, would you like me to convince you that spirit is not lost, by telling you I will not hear a word more against your brother?"

"My dear Edith, you know I meant no-

thing against him ; but, seriously, I should not like my wife to be so tame and easy as to say 'yes' to everything I proposed : a little spice is very necessary to vary the flavour of an every-day dish. I do not fancy plain boiled chickens."

"Neither do I like them, Reginald, with vinegar and pepper ; but you are inclined to be impertinent, Sir."

"My dear, sweet, charming sister, pray give me a thorough good box on the ear, if you really believe what you say. Impertinent to you, my dear girl ! nothing could be further from my thoughts. Well, my dear Edith, there is one great comfort to me, marriage has made you look neither dumpy nor dowdy. Edith Knightley will suffer a comparison with Edith Maxwell ; in fact, had you been as beautiful then as you are now, I rather fancy I should have popped the question before Edmund."

"It is fortunate you did not, for two reasons."

"What are those, my pet ?"

"One, that I am much too tame, you

know, to suit a gentleman of your high spirit; and the other I shall leave you to guess."

"I suppose that is not very difficult to surmise; you would not have accepted me? That I suspected long ago. But did you ever behold such a metamorphosis as in your quondam passionate admirer? The wand of Circe could not have effected a greater change than that wrought by Lucy. By Jove, he is as meek as a lamb. But here comes your old beau, Aaron White, in whose august presence I always feel like a mouse before a lion, so *addio, carissima mia.*"

The old Squire did look very imposing that evening, quite colossal to men of moderate frames; and he was also a dandy after his old fashion, although disapproving of dandyism in others. Aaron always dressed well, albeit *more antiquo*—that is, he showed an abundance of cambric frill—not within, but without—the largest white waistcoat in which the human frame had ever been encased. Aaron's was a waist-

coat, indeed! sufficiently capacious, the Captain averred, to make him an entire summer suit for the cricket ground. His neckcloth might have contained as much muslin as there is damask in a small tablecloth. His upper garment, a large high-collared blue coat, with brass buttons; short continuations, with buckles at the knees, succeeded by silk stockings, displaying a leg which, save for its fine regularity of shape, would have been supposed to be produced by elephantiasis: a neat, highly polished shoe, with buckles, finished Aaron's costume. *Ingenti sub hoc corpore*, however, lay one of the most kind and gentle hearts — for his was a meek and lowly mind, condescending to notice the meanest things on earth.

“You have heard of course from Reginald,” he said, advancing to Edith, and sitting down on the ottoman by her side, “the cause of our rather long detention in the dining-room; but as here this subject is forbidden, I would merely relieve you from any apprehensions as to Edmund's being led into expenses he cannot afford,

and say that his father purposes making him a very handsome allowance to help to maintain the establishment, and should that prove insufficient, Chetwynd has generously offered to add five hundred a year, which Edmund, as I anticipated, declined; but it will be my business to raise amongst his friends, whenever necessary, a sum sufficient to cover every expense, and I think you can trust your old friend Aaron White to hold him harmless in this matter."

"Indeed I can, Mr. White, and I feel most grateful for the very kind interest you take in Edmund's welfare, who, I am sure, will manage everything as carefully as possible."

"Yes, my dear, he has ever been a prudent lad, with no expensive habits or nonsensical fancies, and he will do things well, although economically. The Colonel, I thought, might oppose us a little, but seeing the general disposition to aid and assist with heart and purse, he is rather proud now of his son-in-law's preferment



to one of the first posts of honour in the county, and I suspect will volunteer his assistance also; for between ourselves, my dear, your papa—notwithstanding his usual complaints about scarcity of money and hard times—has much more of the former than he can spend. Well, all the better one of these days, for my little god-child, who, if it please God to spare her life, will be an heiress.”

“Not a very rich one, Mr. White.”

“Rich enough, my dear. It is a great drawback to a woman’s happiness having too much worldly pelf, which every worldling is trying to pilfer. Heiresses are more to be pitied than envied. Had not your poor friend Agnes been represented as passing wealthy, she had not attracted the attention of that greatest of all villains, some of whose class are always lying in wait to entrap unwary girls when first introduced to the world. Well, I suppose, now that Mrs. Chetwynd has taken her seat at the piano, we must all become listeners instead of talkers. But those

Italian bravuras are not at all to my taste. She has a splendid voice truly, and yet the tones want that soft silvery melody which wins and engages our deepest attention by going at once to the heart."

## CHAPTER XV.

"MY dear," Chetwynd said to his wife, the morning after their dinner party at Wychwood Court, "it is our turn now, I think, to have a housewarming, which I propose giving some time next month, and I will ask Edmund to bring the hounds here the next day. We have ample room to accommodate many of our more distant acquaintances, and your brother John will no doubt assist us in this respect. I vote for doing the thing well, with a ball and supper."

"It will be very expensive, Edward."

"Of course, my dear Lucy, it will cost money, but we can well afford it, once in our lives at least, if not oftener, and this is a fitting time for dispensing our hospitality;

so you and Emmeline can make out a list of all we know, far and near, rich and poor, lay or clerical, within a certain distance."

"Lady Gertrude and Mr. Shuttleworth, Edward?"

"Yes, my dear, of course; poor fellow! he is more an object of pity than dislike. We must not visit the sin of the father upon the son; irrespective of which, his wife's relationship to Dunkerton is sufficient reason for our inviting them."

"Is Captain Duncombe to be included?"

"Certainly, Lucy—his mother and sisters also. That Captain is not a bad sort of fellow, and extensively patronised by the ladies."

"So I have heard, Edward, and that Edith Maxwell could scarcely resist his persuasive eloquence to become Mrs. Duncombe."

"There you have been decidedly misinformed, my dear. She had no eyes or ears for any one but Edmund Knightley, since her first introduction to society, al-

though her attachment remained for some time locked up in her own breast. And now, my dear Lucy, having business to attend to this morning, you can drive over after luncheon and consult Emmeline, who knows every one we ought to ask."

A few days after the cards were issued, the Captain dined with his old *protégé* at Grimston Hall, where, from being greatly patronised by Lady Gertrude Shuttleworth, he had become thoroughly domesticated—as much, or even more, than he had been at Hardington during the short reign of Shuttleworth *Père*."

"Well, Jack," he exclaimed, when they were discussing the one bottle of port, after Lady Gertrude had retired, "'you are doing very nicely, my dear,' as the butcher said to the fattening calf; 'and you'll only want a little blood-letting to turn you out into very pretty veal.' What with sitting half the day smoking and drinking beer, and the other half snoozing in that luxurious chair, you are becoming an object, Jack,—yes, a veritable, undeniable object of amazement

to your friends—a *monstrum horrendum informe*, and I may add the remainder, *cui lumen ademptum*; for as to eyes, you are beginning to resemble a mole, or that fat pig of yours in the sty, upon which you bestow so much attention. By Jove! one can scarcely tell whether he has any eyes at all in his head. But, seriously speaking, you must take to hunting again. Lady Gertrude agrees with me on this point, and I will make you a present of my old hunter Doncaster, to begin work with on the fifth of November, when all the world will be at St. Austin's, to greet the young master."

"I don't like him, Duncombe, and shall not go out with his hounds."

"Then you are an *asinus*, Jack; for Edmund Knightley is well disposed towards you, although you thought once to rob him of his lady love."

"And you too, Duncombe, I suspect tried the same game."

"After you, my boy, if I did at all—*quod est demonstrandum*, which requires



proof; but at any rate, you had your first innings."

"That don't signify; I'm booked now, and laid upon the shelf, with the prospect of running a dead heat with the Patriarch Jacob. By Jove, Duncombe! if they go on multiplying in this fashion annually, there will be a famine at Grimston Hall, and I must cut away into Egypt or France, where food is cheaper than hereabouts."

"Never mind, old fellow—large families always get on better in the world than small ones, and you will be able to put your dog puppies out to walk, with little trouble, if you play your cards well. Dunkerton has friends at court and the horse-guards—get you commissions for two or three, no doubt; and Edmund Knightley can help you with the East India Company, one of the chief directors being related to him; so to keep well with all, you must don the bit of pink again. You will be forgotten if you sit up here all day, like an owl in a barn. Come out, Jack, into the sunshine—let people see you are alive."

“ Well, Duncombe— but, after that unlucky go of the governor’s, I am almost ashamed to show my face.”

“ A pack of stuff! What had you to do with it? You were settled and off his hands long before that event took place; and I hear what people say—you are to be pitied, not blamed. By the bye, who do you think stumbled up against me in Manchester, last week?”

“ My governor, most likely.”

“ Just the man; looking as well as ever—asked me to dine at his shop—everything very quiet of course; but he is creeping up again, my boy; has made a good spec or two already, and gave me a hint he should be able to hold his head up again in a few years, perhaps, nearly as high as ever. Yes, there’s the mystery with men in trade, which I can’t understand. Down they come—crash, all at once—get into the Gazette—through the court—haven’t a stiver left—goods and everything sold off; and within a few months there they are again, set up in business, with

stock in hand, and credit to any amount. But if a poor devil of a gentleman, like myself, were to get into trouble and lose his money, his dearest friends would not help him with the loan of a five-pound note. I don't mean to accuse your governor, Jack, of dishonest practices, for I believe he intended to act fairly by all; but he had so many irons in the fire, at the same time going the whole hog with his town and country establishments, that I felt sure he would burn his fingers at last. Lucky for you Grimston Hall was settled upon yourself and family."

"Well, Duncombe, what did the governor say more?"

"That he was too deeply engaged at present to pay you a visit just yet, perhaps not for some time; but that you were to keep up your spirits, and not stick so closely to the beer barrel, and that in a few days he would send you a pipe of sherry, instead of swallowing such a quantity of malt liquor."

"That governor of mine is not a bad sort of fellow, Duncombe."

“Certainly not, but a long way from it. He helped Dunkerton and myself to some pretty little pickings; in short, to confess the truth, he made a man of me, with those few hundreds I invested in railway scrip—sold them again, nearly cent. per cent. and here I am now at my little crib on the hill, just as jolly a dog as either of your wealthy bachelors—Welford or Addleby,—as comfortable as any man need be.”

“Without a wife, Duncombe, you should have added.”

“I’m not quite sure, Jack, that a wife would add much, if anything, to the comfort of my little hunting box, which is on a small scale, neat and cosy—room enough for one only. A wife and children would spoil the snugness of the thing entirely.”

“You were always such a lady fancier, I thought you could not live without them.”

“I may just exist—barely exist, Jack—without one of these dear creatures, but the beauty of the most lovely picture seems to fade when you have brought it

home, and look on it daily. What do you think?"

"More than I must say," and Jack turned a wistful look towards the door; "things can't be undone now, Duncombe."

"Not without a deal of trouble, and you are not worse off than scores of other fellows. Got a good manager, Jack, any way."

"Ah! yes—very; keeps everything in order, and"—

"You, too—no denying it, old fellow."

"Fought hard at first for the head place, but it wouldn't do; anything for a quiet life—you understand—quick temper, fretful, &c.—fighting made things worse."

"Just so: the best part of valour is discretion; you are a prudent fellow, Jack. Go to Chetwynd's, of course?"

"My Lady will, but I had rather not; poor work looking on when a fellow is booked, with a family of six small children. No woman would dance with me now."

"Ask your old flame Edith; she is the belle of the lot yet, and she won't say

you nay; she is far too kind-hearted to remember the past."

"Then if you think so, Duncombe, by Jove! I'll go. That governor of mine made a sad hash of the job, or she might have suited me."

"Not unlikely, Jack, if you had suited her; but she did not belong to the class of marrying women, that very common class who will marry any man for a good settlement. There you and some others made a great mistake; she was not the girl to have accepted a prince, unless she loved him with all her heart. Edmund Knightley was the man; and a lucky fish he is—we minnows must put up with smaller flies."

"Tea is taken into the drawing-room, Sir," interrupted the friends' further discussion upon this subject. The announcement acting as an electric shock upon our hero, by rousing him up from his chair instantaneously.

"Take any more wine, Duncombe?" he asked.



“ We may as well finish the bottle of sherry, not above a couple of glasses in it.”

“ My lady wife takes two always at luncheon.”

“ Ah ! I see—just the quantum left : don’t like a fresh cork drawn for herself, I suppose ? ”

“ You are not far out, Duncombe.”

“ She has got an eye to business—quick and sharp. Sit down again, Jack, and hand me the bottle ; ”—upon taking hold of which, he filled his friend’s glass, and then his own.

“ Who pays your wine-merchant’s bill ? ”

“ I do, of course, Duncombe.”

“ Then you have the best right to drink the wine. Now economy is all right and proper, to a certain extent, but a wife has no business in her husband’s cellar ; that’s your department, and I advise you to keep the key yourself. You have your four thousand a year, and if you cannot afford to give a friend a few extra glasses of wine when he dines with you, I think that a very hard case indeed ; and, by Jove ! Sir, cir-

cumstanced as you are—all the money on your side, and little enough on hers—you are a confounded fool to be kept in this straight order by your wife! You are an easy-going contented fellow, Master Jack, but you are not to be made a cipher in your own house. A woman has no right to rule her husband, whom she has sworn to obey, and, by gad, if ever I should be fool enough to marry, no wife shall ever govern me. Pull the bell, and let's have another bottle, not to finish, but to broach—and show your butler your determination not to knock under any longer."

"Perhaps we had better not, Duncombe,—there will be a row if we do, when you are gone."

"So much the better; have it out, and let her know who's who. I'll do it for you, as you are so shilly shallying;" and rising, Duncombe gave the bell a rattling pull, which brought the butler directly.

"I want another glass of sherry, Plimmer."

The gentleman in black bowed and with-

drew, without another word about tea, for there was an expressive look about the Captain's mouth which meant mischief.

The fresh bottle was soon introduced, from which the Captain, having helped himself, pushed it across to his companion, with the remark, "Not a bad tap, Jack, and a decided improvement upon the last, which had been decantered too long; wanted finishing, old fellow—all the better for my lady to-morrow. You are not in spirits to-night; toss it off, I will stand the racket."

"Your tea is quite cold," were the words addressed to the Captain, as he entered the drawing-room, by Lady Gertrude, who was sitting near the fire reading the newspaper of the day.

"Of no consequence to me, I assure your Ladyship, as I seldom take tea after wine."

"Mr. Shuttleworth has detained you so long," she continued, "that I was just going to have it removed."

"*I* detained him, Lady Gertrude, not he

me ; and as to the length of time," taking his watch from his waistcoat pocket, "it is hardly half an hour since you deserted us ; but the fact was, that knowing your Ladyship takes sherry only, I persisted in finishing off the remnants of the stale bottle, and asked for a fresh one for your Ladyship's benefit at luncheon to-morrow."

"I think Mr. Shuttleworth takes too much wine, he is becoming so very stout."

"More wine and less stout would prevent him becoming so very stout, Lady Gertrude, and I have been advising him to resume his horse exercise. He must take to hunting again, or he will soon become a waggon-load instead of a cart-load."

"We cannot afford to keep hunters now, Captain Duncombe ; we can barely manage as we live to keep out of difficulties."

"One month less in town would give your husband six months hunting in the country."

"Oh ! I cannot give up dear London, it is the only opportunity I have of seeing my relations, and keeping up my connections.

To oblige Mr. Shuttleworth, seven months of the year are spent in this dull country place, where one is devoured by ennui and distracted by the children."

"Well, Lady Gertrude, I think you will have plenty of gay doings here this winter, and I conclude you patronise Mrs. Chetwynd's ball?"

"Perhaps I may; but do you think it will be worth a new dress?"

"Worth attending, certainly, for Chetwynd has invited half the county, and he has the most splendid suite of rooms for such a purpose in all Huntingshire. Moreover, Mrs. Chetwynd and himself are sure to do the thing well."

We will only say that the Captain's prognostications in respect of this grand *réunion* at Dropmore were more than realised. It was a splendid affair; and strange to relate, everybody was pleased; even the pettish Lady Gertrude, who, having a new dress for the occasion, displayed it to the full, by joining in nearly every dance, and flirting outrageously with

a German cousin, the Baron Sternheim, greatly to Jack's disgust, but as both conversed in the German language, our hero could not collect, save from looks and gestures, the purport of their discourse.

"Who's your friend, Jack?" asked the Captain, "staying at Grimston?"

"Can't say, upon my life, Duncombe. Lady Gertrude calls him Cousin Adolphus; may be so, for anything I know to the contrary; for he's an uncommon cool hand: rings the bell for everything he wants without consulting me; can't drink port, but does his two bottles of claret easy after dinner, and not long about it either. Then off to the drawing-room *squallini bellini* with my Lady till midnight, long before which time I'm obliged to go to roost."

"Fashionable looking fellow, Jack, and I dare say well-bred; but I never heard Dunkerton say anything about German connections."

"Suppose it's all right though, Duncombe, eh?"



“ Or *vice versâ*, all t’ other way ; but you had better take a snooze in your arm chair, my boy, and not go to roost quite so early, whilst the Baron remains at Grimston.”

“ Egad, Duncombe, from what my Lady said yesterday, he is booked for an inside place there during the winter. He wants to see English country life, it seems, and foxhunting, so Dunkerton is to be asked to mount him two days a week ; and for to-morrow you are to lend him a hunter.”

A prolonged “wh-e-e-w !” escaped the Captain at this information, who seemed for a moment occupied with his own thoughts, but after a pause he added,

“ Yes, Jack, I’ll lend him a horse if asked, and much good may it do him. You shall have old Doncaster though, and come out and see the fun. Now go and ask Mrs. Edmund Knightley to dance with you — she will, if not engaged, I know.”

Edith was engaged for that and the succeeding dance, but pitying our crest-fallen hero, who was looking that night the picture of misery, she made him quite happy

by accepting him for the third ; for since his father's downfall, Jack had become exceedingly meek and humble, and he expressed, as well as he could, his sense of Edith's condescension in conferring a favour almost unexpected.

"I am so much obliged," he said, "for the honour you have done me — for it is an honour I value above all others — and that you do not look coldly upon me, like so many, since my father's unfortunate failure ; Lady Gertrude even does not spare me."

"I am sorry to hear this, Mr. Shuttleworth ; you are not liable for the faults of others."

"Although punished for them, Mrs. Knightley."

"By the worldly-minded, not by those of Christian feelings, Mr. Shuttleworth. We shall see you, I hope, at St. Austin's, on the opening day there, as you have heard no doubt of Edmund's taking the hounds."

"Many thanks for your kind invitation,

which, although I had given up hunting, I will certainly accept."

"Oh! Captain Duncombe," exclaimed Lady Gertrude, "you are the very person I have been seeking; I wish to introduce you to my cousin, Baron Sternheim."

Bows being exchanged, she added, "Could you let the Baron have a horse for to-morrow? He is a grand chasseur in his own country, and wishes to see how hunting is done in ours."

"*I will lend* a hunter with pleasure, Lady Gertrude, but although accused of being a gentleman horse-dealer, I have not yet put up the notice over my stable door, 'Horses to let on hire.'"

"You<sup>r</sup> misunderstood me, indeed, Captain Duncombe; I never supposed you let horses out by the day or week."

"Then if your Ladyship will do me the favour of calling at my crib to-morrow, on your road to Dropmore, your cousin shall have the choice of the only two horses I have fit for use that day."

"I am exceedingly obliged by your kind-

ness. Have you seen Mr. Shuttleworth? as we purpose leaving now, very soon."

"He was dancing, when last I saw him, in the large saloon, with Mrs. Edmund Knightley."

"Indeed!" was the only word uttered, in a surprised tone, which reached the Captain's ear, as with a bow he passed on.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE gathering together of Foxhunters, the morning succeeding the ball at Dropmore, was fixed for twelve o'clock ; and as every house in the neighbourhood was filled with guests for the last night's entertainment, a very large meeting was expected. Carriages and horses were seen approaching from every quarter, and by the hour named some three hundred horsemen appeared in hunting costume upon the lawn at the western approach, which was separated from the pack by a single chain fence only.

Will Lane, with his pack of eighteen couples selected for that day's hunting, looked the *beau ideal* of a huntsman of the olden time, on his favourite old grey, with his two attendants, Charley and Jack, all in

their new uniform, and dressed with scrupulous neatness. Their demeanour also was that of servants belonging to a true English gentleman, somewhat stately, although most respectful; feeling a pride in imitating their master's courteous manner to all.

"Ah! Will," exclaimed the Old Squire, Aaron White, "you look more like yourself this morning than I have seen you this month past."

"Yes, Sir, I feels well and happy—it's here, Squire," pointing to his breast; "Mr. Edmund's kind words have made me feel as light as a bird. No heart-burnings now, Squire. That young gentleman yonder," meaning Charley, "don't show us any more of his airs now, since Mr. Edmund gave him a bit of advice."

"Glad to hear it, Will. But we have a large attendance this morning!"

"Yes, Squire; I'm a-thinking I never see quite so many afore at this place. Mr. Chetwynd's ball have done it, Sir."

"No doubt, Will; there are men from



all quarters here to-day, and a German Baron, they say, to see how we do these things; but come from where they may, they can't pick a hole in our turn-out — men, horses, and hounds; and I trust we shall find a traveller to show them the country."

The stranger had selected, as the Captain anticipated, the finest animal of the two offered him, a big, slashing, chestnut horse, called Firebrand, which he bestrode after the fashion of the German school, with a seat and hand more like a cavalry officer of his own nation than an English foxhunter; and it was evident, from the horse's fidgeting and curveting against a too tightened curb, that the Baron was intent on displaying his horsemanship to the ladies, a large number of whom were gazing upon the scene, some from the windows of the house, and others from their carriages. The Captain, and his chum, Jack, having taken their glass of jumping powder, were sitting on their horses watching the Baron's proceedings, when the former remarked,

“Keep your eyes upon him, Jack, on account of my horse. Old Doncaster won’t pull an ounce, so take things quietly; ride in your friend’s wake, and I’ve a notion you will see some fun, for that arrant fool knows no more about handling a hunter than a rhinoceros — jamming and cramming him against the bit as if he were on parade.”

“What am I to do, Duncombe, if he gets spilt?”

“Take care of my horse, Jack, and let that chap take care of himself; but don’t let him have the old one you are riding. Ah! there it is, just as I thought, Firebrand won’t stand it any longer; he has reared bolt upright, but the fellow don’t come off; that seems a lesson he has often practised before. He smiles and bows to the Marchioness and Lady Gertrude with a *vos plaudite* air. But look! that dig of his spur has made Firebrand mad — he’s away, by Jove!” and with a bound, catching the bit on his teeth, Firebrand dashed furiously for the chain fence, over which he sprang

high in the air — taking it sideways — and throwing his tormentor clean out of the saddle.

“Ah!” cried the Captain, “he is down on his knowledge box; pick up your friend, Jack, whilst I go for my horse.”

Save the crumpling up of a new beaver into something like an opera hat, the Baron sustained little other damage to *propria persona*, or to his other vestments, the turf being soft and clean. He picked himself up without waiting for Jack’s assistance, for which he might have waited some time, since our hero did not exhibit the slightest appearance of alacrity in rendering aid to the discomfited Baron, who looked exceedingly disgusted with the result of his grand display of equestrianism in the presence of this large phalanx of female beauty.

Firebrand, having been captured by a groom, was led back by the Captain to his rider, who had remained stationary on the spot where he fell, apparently wholly intent on restoring his hat to its former shape,

but in reality dreading to appear on foot before the ladies.

"I tank you, Sare," he said, addressing the Captain, "for de troble you take in catching mine horse; but he want de *manége*, Sare; he no half taught de use of de bit in his moth."

"We don't break our hunters, Sir, in riding schools," the Captain replied rather testily; "this horse will not stand what you call the *manége* — holding him tight by the head and cramming the spurs into his side at the same time. In our hunting fields we ride with a slack rein, Baron."

"Vare well, Sare, I much oblige for de loan of your horse, and de advice."

"I don't like the look of that fellow, Will," remarked Edmund to his huntsman.

"Nor I, Sir," was the reply; "and I'm a-thinking he will be in a-top of the hounds, if they get in his way."

There was a short dialogue between master and man, after which the former, riding up to his first whipper-in, said something in a low tone, to which the only response

audible was, "Yes, Sir," with a hand raised respectfully to his cap.

"Now, Will," cried Edmund, "we are ready, move off."

On the signal to advance being given, the Master and Charley put themselves at the head of the pack to clear the way, Tom Springfield and Jack acting as rear-guard. The laurels on the pleasure ground were to be first drawn, and the day being fine, many ladies were walking about the lawn facing the south-west, to which there was no admission for horsemen, Will Lane and Charley attending the hounds on foot. Within five minutes a crash was heard through the evergreens, which sent the pheasants whirling up in the air, with their beautiful plumage glittering in the sunbeams; like so many skyrockets, and the hares scurrying and scuttling about the lawn in frenzied bewilderment, running against each other and the ladies, like a lot of rats bundled out of an old corn-stack. Every hound is at him — every tongue let loose — as the fox breaks from the centre belt

of laurels across the open green-sward in view of the whole pack.

“Oh, how charming! what a beautiful sight!” burst simultaneously from a hundred pair of rosy lips, the owners of which think little in that moment of excitement of the quivering heart, beating with suffocating sensations, in the body of that little scared animal, flying in terror from his ruthless pursuers, all frantic for his blood. How little do those fair ones consider what their own feelings would be if chased by a body of Red Indians, and obliged to run for their lives!

Roused by the echoing cry of the hounds, every horse is set in motion, prancing, plunging, curveting—all champing their bits with eager impetuosity to join in the fray. The fox makes for the lower bed of evergreens, near the wicket gate leading into the park, towards which a rush is made by the whole cavalcade, the foremost of whom arrived there just in time to head him before he had emerged five yards from the fence. He turns short, nearly



into the mouths of his pursuers, but eludes their fangs. Again wood, hill, and dale resound with the merry cry of hounds as they race him up the narrow plantation under the boundary wall; again he breaks in view before them across the long terrace-walk, at the extreme end of which stands an old-fashioned rustic summer house, then unfortunately occupied by a nursery maid and two children, by whom the fox is again headed, and, dashing into a bed of rhododendrons, is lost to sight — for a moment only; he reaches the large middle belt once more, is whirled round and round by his maddened foes. A lady meets him with her parasol, as he makes an effort to escape their jaws; he turns short to the right towards the house; he is outflanked by the wide-spreading pack, some of which dashing from the covert meet him at right angles, and roll him over on the lawn.

“Oh! how horrid!” is now the exclamation from all the fair lookers-on. “Poor thing! what a dreadful death!”

"Dat de ladies vox, I suppose," the Baron remarked to Captain Duncombe; "de scene very good, and de music of de dogs — but no gallop for de *cavaliers*."

"That is to come now, I hope," was the reply; "the ladies first, gentlemen next; that's the order of things in our country, Baron."

"You manage dis ting very well, Capitain — von *grand spectacle*, we see it all — de hunting, de dogs, and de vox killed."

"Now then, Baron, we shall find a gentleman's fox in yonder wood," as Will Lane was trotting away across the pack in close converse with his young master.

The hounds were thrown into covert very quietly, and Charley went trotting briskly down the drive to the gate at the further end, through which he speedily disappeared.

"Where dat hunter go? I follow," the Baron said, about to start after him.

"No, no, Baron, stop — that won't do; he is only the whipper-in, sent forward to

view the fox away ; we must wait for, and follow the hounds."

"Vary well, Sare ; but hark ! I hear de dog bark ; he find de fox now."

"Presently, Baron ; all in good time ; that's only old Solomon speaking on the drag."

"Dat Solomon grand dog, I suppose ; he got fine name."

"He's a wise old fellow, like his Jewish namesake ; he tells us the fox has been here ; but as the other hounds don't join, I fear he has given us the slip."

The Captain was not wrong in his conjecture. An old fox, hearing the clatter on the lawn, had quitted his quarters long before the hounds entered the wood ; but old Solomon, with a few others, kept working on his line, until they marked it away in the field below.

"That's the fox we want to day, Will," Edmund said, as the hounds kept feathering on.

"Well, Sir, then we can let 'em try a bit what they can do ; they seems to like it

better, Sir, as they push on under the hedge, and if we can get up to him he is the right sort to show us some sport."

In this manner the hounds had traversed four large pasture fields, although with little improvement as to pace, when Will Lane said, "Perhaps, Sir, we had better hold on at once to Moor Copse; that's his point, Sir—and get out of the crowd of gentlemen who keep pressing forward."

"Not yet, Will—an old cunning fox, when not found by hounds, will lie up in a hedge-row sometimes—give them a few minutes more; and look! the young ones are getting on now. Work of this kind will do them good."

"Dis vara slow," the Baron remarked; "mine horse, he pull so to get on."

"It will be fast enough presently," the Captain replied; "this is what we call walking up to our fox."

"Ah! vara good! we walk truly; dis no grand vox chasse."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when, on the other side of a thick sedgy

hedge-row, a sudden chorus burst forth from the whole pack, which sent every man's heart bounding to his throat. The fox had sprung out just before the hounds reached it.

"Come on!" screamed the Captain, as he sent his horse at the double fence, getting in and out of the opposing quickset very cleverly, on the other side, over a drop leap into a dark peaty meadow. "Now, gentlemen," he said, looking back, "take your places." As men and horses came floundering down, many of the former showing the way, head foremost, to their astonished steeds. Firebrand would have it now all his own way, and the Baron, remembering his owner's advice, and thinking it most prudent not to dispute the point with him, gave him his head.

"Mine ——, what a leap," he muttered, as he was thrown forward upon the pommel of his saddle, by Firebrand's coming down upon his knees, "dis horse, he jump *terrible*; but where de dogs — me no see them — how me follow?"

"Go along, Sir!" roared a first-flight

man, dashing past him; and along he *was* carried, amidst a shower of peat mud dotting him all over like a cameleopard. The fox had skirted the corner of Moor Copse, through which the hounds dashed like lightning, and were now streaming away across the second meadow at a terrific pace, with Edmund, Will Lane, and Charley only in their wake.

"Come along, Sir," shouted the leader, whom Firebrand seemed determined to follow, "come along!" as he sprang over the fence into the thicket; "we shall see them the other side."

"Oh! mine head! mine hat," cried the luckless Baron, being torn through the stiff blackthorns at the mercy of Firebrand, held only by one hand, the other being raised to defend his face from the sharp prickles. "Dis place *terrible*."

"Never mind, Sir; come along!" again reached his ear, and the Baron showed on the other side a figure to behold; without his hat, his long hair hanging in wild disorder over his scratched and bleeding forehead.



Some dozen pink jackets were now added to his company, who all boldly encountered the stiff fences and deep ditches of some half score rough pasture fields, Firebrand carrying his rider cleverly over all without a stumble.

"The river, by Jove!" exclaimed his leader, "and not a bridge in sight: have it we must."

"Me no swim, Sar," cried the Baron in consternation at the wide, rapid stream, within one field of them.

"Your horse can — so come along!" and splash went horse and rider into the bed of the foaming torrent.

"Oh! mine Got," exclaimed the now terrified Baron, as Firebrand sprang high in the air, to clear it at a bound. "Oh! dis is *terrible* work; dis gentleman vox, he der Freischütz, de red *diable*." Further words were stopped, by the spouting and splashing of water about his ears, from which, when emerging, the only visible sign of Firebrand was his head above the eddying current.

“Give him his head to follow me, and don’t pull the reins,” was again shouted forth from the bit of pink cloth, now sailing rapidly down the stream, which in a few minutes was seen to elongate up the bank, at a place where cattle came down to drink. “All right again — here we are on terra firma once more — now for it, to catch them!” and away sped the first-flight man like an arrow from a bow, renovated by his shower-bath for fresh exertions. “Hark! I hear them; hark! — they have reached Hazlewood — Oh! for two turns there in my favour, and we shall be up with you, my young master. Ah! how they rattle him round the covert — every hound seems to have him in view — Ay! there’s Charley’s holloa: hark back! he has been headed!”

A moment’s pause — the pack have swung a few yards outside the wood hedge.

“Hark back!” again cried Charley, with a rate and crack of his whip. They turn like lightning to the well-known tongue of Old Solomon, who has met the fox, and in a second the wood re-echoes with the full

chorus of the pack, crashing and dashing through the stuff, which bends before them like reeds to a flood of outbursting waters. 'Twang—twang—twang goes the horn: "Forward, away!" screams the master; "yonder he flies, up the side of the hedge-row to the right."

"Ay, ay! a bit of luck for me now," exclaims the leader of the Baron; "they are turning our way; but, hang it all, that double post and rails, with a blown horse! Must do it steady, in and out—come along!"

Our leader on his made hunter bounds in and over cleverly the opposing bars; but hearing a crash behind him turns his head, and there lies the Baron on his back, and Firebrand disentangling himself from the splintered timbers.

"Hurt, Sir?" asks one of the dozen, now pressing on.

"Oh! mine vriend — mine arm."

"Ah! nasty fall, very," replied the other, passing on; "can't stop; doctor behind."

"Come along, Sir!" roared another voice,

“your horse is caught for you, and they are at check.”

The Baron, thus roused, discovered he had only strained his wrist, and by running across one field, found his horse tied tightly to the gate post. He had only, however, just time to remount when “forward” again rang in his ears.

“Ah! dis chasse,” he muttered, “de cry, it always be de same — vorward, vorward; vare to dis gentleman vox go?” he inquired of his leading friend.

“Ten miles more, perhaps,” was the quick reply, “come along.”

“Oh! dat man, he alway say ‘Come along —’ vare to, I wish to know.”

They had now reached a small thick covert on the crown of a hill, in which the gallant old fox hung for a few minutes, with the vain hope of shaking off his pursuers.

“Ah! there they come,” exclaimed his conductor, looking back upon the vale they had just traversed; “the bridge and road have let in the ruck to that line of gates—

see how they hustle and bustle along through them. By Jove! they will catch us up now. Confound this wood! yet listen! do you hear the hounds?"

"No, not one dog barks."

"Then they are away — the Master and the Huntsman have given us the slip — come along!" and setting spurs to his horse, the leader rounded the crest of the hill. "Ah! yonder they go, all clustering together like a flock of pigeons, and as mute as mice, heads up and sterns down, running as if they had him in view: come along," and crash went the speaker through a thick bullfinch, leaving one skirt of his coat fluttering on a blackthorn bough.

"Stop, Monsieur! you lose your coat and pocket-handkerchief."

"Never mind; come along."

"Ah! dat man—dat 'Come along!' he leave his leg behind, and still say 'Come along!' Dis English chasseur, he de bery *diable*," and rush went Firebrand through the fence, and with another fearful scratch across the Baron's face, he was landed in

the field below like a trapped frog, with arms extended round his horse's neck.

"A near go," was whispered almost in his ear by a well-known voice. "Pick him up, and come along."

"Aha, Capitain, dat you?"

"I hardly know; Dick Highflyer said he should not have known me, save for the colour of my horse's mane."

"Where you been, Capitain?"

"Pitched head foremost into a bog —left one boot there, and my hat: ride al Turco, now, with my bandana round my head; but never mind, come along," and away went the Captain on his Arab, switching his tail from the prick of the one spur, with Firebrand and the Baron in close companionship.

"Ven dis *grand chasse* end, Capitain? I am vara fatigue."

"Keep up your pluck, Baron, we haven't half done yet; now for a fly," as a five-barred gate stood in their way. Over went the Captain like a bird; but the Baron, remembering his last mishap at timber,



pulled Firebrand with a jerk on taking off, which threw him across the top bar; but being old it gave way, saving the Baron from a rattling fall.

“Just missed a broken neck, or smashed ribs, Baron,” cried the Captain, hearing the crash. “Give him his head, Sir, or he will give you something to remember presently.”

For four miles further the hounds held on their course with little variation in speed, and each man was obliged to be content with the position he held; the edge had been taken off their horses’ mettle, which now took their fences more deliberately, and their riders began to see the necessity of husbanding their strength for prolonged exertions.

“Well, Baron,” asked the Captain, “what think you now of our foxhunting?”

“Vara grand, mine vriend — ride, ride, ride; jomp, jomp, jomp; but me not see von dog, or dat gentleman vox; dat leetle animal he go *terrible* fast vor dog not to catch him.”

“Look out, Baron,” cried the Captain, as

they were galloping side by side towards a gentleman's seat, "there's a drop t'other side, sit back."

"Hah! hah! mine vriend, dat jomp take me by surprise."

"Just so, Baron; we call it — hah! hah! Hark! by Jove, there's a holloa the other side of the house, and there they go; you see the hounds now, Baron, running up that ploughed field yonder to the right."

"Ah! me see de dogs — look vara leetle now."

"They will look less presently, if we do not mend our pace; the ground goes lighter, so come along," when switch went the Captain at a stone wall, over which, touching the top of it with his hind legs, his horse sprang cleverly.

"Dis vorse and vorse," muttered the Baron, "Virebrand not go drow dem. Mine heart! vot a clatter!" as a cart-load of stones followed his descent into the next field: "ah, dere bigger von to come."

"The gate in the corner," cried the Captain, looking back; "follow me."

“Ah, de choice of de two evils; but Virebrand, he break de gate.” Firebrand, however, did not effect this so cleverly as the last, the bars being new and stiff, and the result was a roll over of biped and quadruped into a road, biped going first, to make a cushion for the other to fall upon.

“Hurt?” asked a familiar voice, as horse and rider staggered to their legs.

“Oh! oh!” gasped the poor Baron, beginning to recover his breath.

“Here, old fellow, have a pull at my flask,” said our friend Jack; “pumped the breath out of your body, that’s all; queerish about the stomach, Baron, eh?”

“Vara uncomfortable here,” putting his hand on his chest.

“Never mind, soon go off—all right again. Here’s a road, no more fencing yet, so come along.”

“Ah! mine vat host, he wheeze out, too, ‘Come along!’ Dat seem de war-cry of dese English vox hontsmen.”

For a mile and more, Jack took the lead of his German cousin along the road, be-

spattering him all over with mud and mire, when, to his inexpressible delight, the fox crossed over some three hundred yards before him.

"There he goes, by jingo!" cried Jack, slackening his rein.

"Vat go, mine vriend?"

"The fox, by all that's lucky! There, Baron, you see him going over that field to our left."

"Ah! me see; but vare de dogs and de hontsmen? Me vish dey catch dat *terrible* vox."

"Hurrah! here they come, helter-skelter over the wall; they'll have him now, Baron; we are first at last; come along."

Jack, and his friend, now took up the running at their best speed, going down the hill to meet the hounds, which were bending towards them, when the highest of all the stone walls they had yet seen—the boundary of an old park—stopped them short in their career.

"You not jomp dat, Shuttleworth?"

"No, hang it," cried Jack; "but hold

my horse, whilst I make a way through," and down came the stones on both sides, until a breach was effected, through which old Doncaster scrambled to his cautious rider on the right side.

"Now," cried Jack, safe in his pigskin, "come along, there go the hounds over the opposite hill; that confounded wall has spoilt our start; but see, here is another road all in their line."

The hounds, as Jack had said, were now climbing the opposite hill, having passed through a small covert in the narrow though deep valley below, which offering considerable obstruction to those unacquainted with the only narrow trackway leading out of this thicket, Edmund and Charley were the only two with the hounds, Will Lane being unable any longer to keep his place.

"By Jove, my Lord," cried the Captain to the first-flight man, as they were toiling up the opposite bank together, "they have slipped us again; but there's the huntsman just before us: where are the hounds, Will?"

“Right ahead, Sir ; I can’t go much farther ; but young Master is with ’em.”

“Where’s his point now, Will ?”

“Conholt Woods, Captain, I’m a-thinking, if he can reach ’em.”

“What ! five miles further still ! By Jove ! my Lord, this *is* a run.”

“Just the thing I like, Sir ; so come along.”

The pace begins to slacken as some arable fields are crossed, and at last the hounds threw up on a piece of fallow, where the fox had been headed by a plough team.

“Turn them to me, Charley,” cried Edmund, “he must be to the right ; see those magpies flying and chattering above that hedge-row yonder ; that’s his line ; look how they dart down now — they view him if we don’t. Here, here, here,” cried Edmund, lifting his hounds over the fallows ; “forward, my lads !” and with heads up and sterns down, away went the pack with fresh energy.

“Now we shall have him ere he reaches that big wood.”



“Tallyho!” shouts Charley; “there he is in view, across that grass field.” Foreman and Fleecer are racing for his brush; he makes one last effort, eludes Fleecer’s fangs, and bundles through the wood hedge. Foreman springs over.

“Beat us, Sir,” says Charley, “at last.”

“Not so, they have him!” exclaims the delighted Master; “that sound of almost stifled tongues, none can mistake.”

“Whoo-whoop!” shouts Charley, jumping from his horse and tearing through the black thorns, “they *have* got him, whoo-whoop!”

Captain Duncombe and the Earl of Waterton — Edith’s former suitor — were toiling up the furrows of a heavy ploughed field, their horses scarcely able to make a trot, when the former exclaimed, “Hark! my Lord, that’s Edmund Knightley’s whoo-whoop — ay, they have him — I hear now the baying of the hounds. By Jove! that’s a rare piece of luck, before he could reach those thundering big woods; we may take it quietly now.”

"I am for keeping my place, Duncombe, from find to finish. There are some half-dozen pinks behind us straggling along here and there, so come along."

Our friend Alphonso, meanwhile, had, with his German cousin, fortunately fallen into the wake of Will Lane, who knew a by-lane leading up to the covert.

"Now, gentlemen," cried Will, seeing them at a loss what to do, "follow me; I'm a-thinking we shall get up in time to see him afore he is thrown to the hounds."

"What, have they killed him?" asked Alphonso.

"Ay, Sir, sure enough. I hear Mr. Edmund's scream, there's no mistaking what that means."

"De dogs got dat gentleman vox at last, eh, mine vriend?"

"Yes, Baron, it's all right."

"Me so tankful dis *terrible* chasse is done."

"Come along then, there will be other chaps getting in before us; let us ride on as quickly as we can."

Edmund Knightley, with the desire to please the select few whom he could perceive

struggling up in awkward plight, on their distressed horses, had thrown the fox over the bough of a tree standing in the centre of the field, around which the hounds were baying, their deep tones mingling with the shrill notes of his horn, when the Earl of Waterton made his appearance first on the scene, being soon followed by the Captain and Reginald Knightley.

“Capital wind up, Knightley,” he exclaimed; “I congratulate you upon so satisfactory a result: a very near thing though?”

“Rather; but they would have had him three fields back, save for a plough team; and yet so beaten was he that these big woods could scarce have saved his life.”

“Well done, Edmund!” cried Reginald, now walking his horse leisurely in; “that old gentleman has tried the nags to-day, and mine has had more than *quantum suff.* Not quite in trim yet; too early in the season for a splitting run like this. By gad, there’s a fellow in every field between this and Moore Copse; but, by all that’s ludicrous, who’s that coming up with old

Will, tattered and torn, and all forlorn, without his hat?"

"Baron Sternheim," the Captain said, "to whom you were introduced last night, by Lady Gertrude."

"By gad! Duncombe, I should scarcely recognise him in this disguise."

"Ah! mine vriend has been in de wars to-day. I vonder how he relishes dat vox *chasse* now. By gad, Sir, his face is cut to ribbons."

"He does not want pluck, Reginald," Lord Waterton observed; "for I can answer to his having had some rattling falls; and he took the river like a duck, where he got a precious ducking with myself."

"A *nolens-volens* sort of venture that, I suspect," the Captain remarked; "Fire-brand *would* have it, whether the Baron would let him or no. 'Heigho! says Roley,' like the frog who went out courting against his mamma's wishes."

"Better offer him the brush, Reginald," Edmund said, "if Waterton does not want it — he was first up."

"Let the Baron have it by all means," Lord Waterton replied.

"Ah! mine leetle vriend," the Baron said, now approaching the tree, "I so glad to see you dare; you give de great trouble to catch you."

"I hope you enjoyed your gallop?" Edmund said.

"Vell, tank you; de *chasse* vara grand; but dat jomp, jomp, jomp, *terrible* work; and dat river! ah, but vor mine vriend dere in de half coat, me veed de vishes at de bottome. I tank you kindly, Sar, now, vor your good advice, and leading me out de foaming stream. Accept mine obligations and mine card," he continued, tendering his bit of pasteboard to Lord Waterton, who expressed his pleasure at having been able to render the Baron that little service, and offering his own card in return.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, glancing at the name, "you noble rider as well as nobleman. You grand nation of vox hontsmen."

"My brother has desired me to offer you

the brush, Baron Sternheim," Reginald said, "we consider it the trophy of war."

"I tank your broder moch, he vara good; but me no take it from me Lord Waterton, he come first."

"No, no, Baron, thank you. It is your first appearance in the hunting field, and we must all beg your acceptance of it for having ridden so gallantly, without your hat, through this severe run. Your friend Shuttleworth will have it properly preserved for you."

"Tank you, me Lord. I shall prize it vara moch, as a memento of my first *introduction* to your grand English *chasse*."

A ring having been formed by the horse-men round the tree, Edmund Knightley held the fox for a moment above his head, and then with a short shrill view holloa, threw it to the expectant pack, jumping and baying around him.

"Ah, dat shriek," cried the Baron, "it go drough mine ear," putting his hands to his head; "but dat leetle vox, he soon de-



voured by dose grand dogs ; dey eat him up, skin and all."

"Now, Gentlemen," said Edmund, remounting his horse, when the last ceremony had been performed, "having done our best to cater for your amusement, we hope you are satisfied with 'Our Finish.'"

THE END.

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